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CHRISTIAN HOPE.

CHRISTIAN HOPE.

BY

JOHN ANGELL JAMES.

Unfading HOPE! when life's last embers burn,
When soul to soul, and dust to dust return,
Heaven to thy charge resigns the awful hour.
Oh then thy kingdom comes! Immortal power!
CAMPBELL.

The Lord Jesus Christ which is our HOPE.

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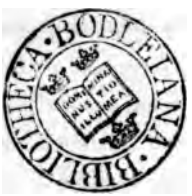

To the Reverend

ROBERT WILLIAM DALE, M.A.

My Dear Brother and Colleague,

To no one can I dedicate this little work with more pleasure than to you, whom I so cordially received as my fellow-labourer in the Christian Pastorate, and whose association with me in the discharge of its momentous functions has been characterised by so much reciprocal harmony, esteem, and regard.

Our official union has supplied another proof, if such were wanting, that age and youth can blend their respective advantages in ministerial work, without their beneficial operation being disturbed and hindered by envy or jealousy.

Without pledging you before the public for the adoption, as your own, of all the expressions or even opinions contained in the following pages, I believe I may confidently affirm, that they are substantially your own: for how can two walk together except they are agreed?

What I here send forth has, with no considerable variation, been the subject of my ministerial teaching for more than half a century. It exhibits my latest, as well as my earliest, views of "the Truth as it is in Jesus."

In the prospect, and which at my time of life cannot be a remote one, of "laying down the ministry I have received of the Lord," it is a profound satisfaction to me to believe, that the same great doctrines which are here professed, will continue after my retirement or decease, in your sermons, to be the themes of the pulpit which we now jointly occupy. These truths have, by the blessing of God, raised the large congregation which is committed to our care; and by these alone, will it be kept in its present vigour and prosperity.

May your Pastorate be as long and as happy as mine has been, and abundantly more useful in the conversion of souls. And after labouring harmoniously on earth, may we rest together in heaven.

Such is the prayer of

Your fellow-worker in the service of Christ,

J. A. JAMES.

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PREFACE.

Having already sent forth a treatise on both FAITH and CHARITY, which have met with much acceptance from the public, I felt a natural and not an unworthy desire to complete the consideration of the apostolic trio of christian graces, by issuing another on HOPE. To this I was also impelled by two facts. *First.*—There is not, as far as my knowledge of theological literature extends, an English work devoted exclusively to this subject. Gurnall, Howe, and Bates have discussed it in parts of their valuable writings, and it will be found incorporated in the numerous sermons and essays of other authors. *Secondly.*—The importance of the subject justifies this attempt to bring it somewhat more fully before the lovers of practical religious literature. It is in fact the substance of the New Testament; the end of redemption; the glory of christianity; and the antidote of nature's supreme evil. It goes with us where all other subjects leave us;—to the entrance of the dark valley of the shadow of death, and when every other light is extinguished, furnishes us with the only lamp that can guide us through the domain

of death, to the realms of glory, honour, and immortality. Thus it accomplishes what the human understanding never could achieve, by solving the sublimely awful problem of man's existence beyond the grave.

Unaided reason never did, and never could, arrive at a satisfactory conclusion regarding the immortality of the soul and a future state of happiness. It could not be sure that the spirit survives the wreck of its material frame; for some appearances are against it, which the presumptive arguments in favour of it, are too feeble to refute. If it *could* prove *this* fact, of the soul's existence beyond the grave, still it could not demonstrate, nor scarcely hope, that it would be immortal; for eternity seems to be an attribute too vast for any one but God himself. If by any means it could persuade itself of this, it would be unable to prove that the soul would enter upon its felicity immediately after death. Equally uncertain would it be, of what that future felicity consists; still more would it be at a loss to know by what means celestial happiness was to be obtained, and how the sinful, earthly spirit of man was to be meetened for its enjoyment. All *these* questions being satisfactorily solved, there would yet remain the unrelieved, unrelievable doubt, whether this immortal existence and felicity were intended for all that wear the form of man, for the swarming millions of the human race, the countless multitudes descending to the lowest grade of humanity, or only for the flower and chivalry of mankind. Thus, at every step of the inquiry reason is bewildered, and sees shadows, clouds, and

darkness resting upon her horizon. To all these questions, her oracle is dumb, or gives out only vague responses, doubtful and delusive. To settle these points, it was necessary that God himself should speak. He *has* spoken, and it is the glory of divine Revelation, that it does not hold out mere dim and obscure disclosures, but throws a flood of noon-tide radiance upon all these solemn and momentous inquiries. With what glowing raptures should we bless God for that gospel which brings life and immortality to light, and meets the deepest cravings of the soul. A poet has sung, in the charms of verse, "The Pleasures of Hope." It is for the christian with his bible opening a vista into heaven, to realize and enjoy them.

To the subject of this volume I have also been in some measure led by my own circumstances. In the seventy-third year of my life, and the fifty-third of my ministry, I have no need of a special revelation to assure me that "I must shortly put off this my tabernacle:" by the course of nature, this cannot be far off. The shadows of evening are gathering fast and thick around me, and I find it most consoling, on the border country of the world unseen, to go forward into what would be otherwise a dark unknown, guided and cheered by a hope full of immortality. I am induced to believe that what has comforted me in the preparation of the work, may by perusal be a source of consolation to others.

Many things are most accurately seen, in their relative importance, when viewed in the decline of life. It is in

the calm of the evening, and not during the heat, and bustle, and burden of the day, that men in trade best judge of the objects which have engaged their attention in the hours of business. So it is with the christian, in reflecting upon his religious life, and especially with the Christian minister, in looking back upon the pursuits of his official career. I am not even now indifferent to many lesser matters of christian truth; the subject of ecclesiastical polity still interests me; for surely the framework of Christ's church, and the order of his house, must be of *some* consequence: and I am therefore no latitudinarian in reference to this matter. The system of Congregationalism which for more than half a century I have maintained, I believe comes nearer the *general principles* laid down in the New Testament than any other. This is all I claim for it. A closer approximation than others, to the model of the apostolic churches, is all that any of us can boast of: perhaps no modern system is, or can be a *perfect* copy of what, from its peculiar circumstances, must of necessity have been unique. If ever I held my views of church government with the prejudice of a bigot, or propagated them with the zeal of a fanatic, though I am not conscious of either, that time is for ever gone by. Compared with *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Love*, these things now appear to me only as the skeleton to the living body of Christianity. No man will be either saved or lost by the principles of church government, but by his possession or his destitution of these graces. There are many ways to perdition, but ecclesiastical polity is not one of them.

There is only one way of salvation, and that is, not Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Methodism, nor Congregationalism; but repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Along the bye paths of each of these systems many are continually coming into the King's high-road to eternal life. This should make us charitable to each other, and convince us upon what objects our attention and our zeal should be chiefly concentrated; for is it not pitiable to see men spending so much of their time and energy upon the unprescribed formalities of a ceremonial externalism, to the comparative neglect of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Love*?

Most sad is it, that in the middle of the nineteenth century of the Christian era, so many of its professors should have, if not to learn, yet to remember, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," nor creed and ceremony, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Our holy religion, as exhibited on the page of ecclesiastical history, and of theological controversy, has to its own disparagement, been too often made to appear more like a fury, than a seraph; a demon of destruction, rather than a ministering angel; and brandishing a sword, instead of holding out the olive branch of peace. O that some voice, loud enough to be heard throughout Christendom, and powerful enough to be universally obeyed, would summon us all round the fount of inspired truth, first to purify our much abused vision from the scales of error and prejudice, and then to learn that real christianity consists of the three apostolic graces;

while all else is but her earthly attire, which may vary in fashion and colour, without affecting her substance and life, or destroying her symmetry. Had this been understood, believed, remembered, and practised from the beginning, what monstrous systems of error; what iron yokes of spiritual tyranny; what bloody persecutions; what sacerdotal arrogance and assumption; what disfigurements of the simple and spiritual religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, by Pagan rites and puerile ceremonies; what foul blots upon the fair form of Christianity, would the world have been spared! Amidst the decrees of councils; the edicts of monarchs; the acts of senates; and the controversies of polemics, how has the still small voice of the apostle been stifled, which saith, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." How forward have men been to admire this sacred trio, but how slow to imitate them. Poets have sung their charms; painters have delineated their beauty; music chanted their praises; and eloquence emblazoned their worth—what remains but for preachers to make them the prevailing themes of their ministry, and for professing christians to exhibit them in the practice of their lives. When this shall every where be done, and they shall universally come in place of a heartless orthodoxy and a childish ritualism, then the world will see Christianity as she is, and will covet to be like her; but, till then, multitudes will look upon her with suspicion, and not a few turn from her with disgust.

I am not without apprehension, that there is danger

among Nonconformists just now, of merging the importance of primary matters, in what, after all, is but of secondary and tertiary consequence.

Our great solicitude should be to promote a healthful, spiritual, robust, and saintly piety in our churches; for which no external improvements in our architecture, our psalmody, or our services, can be a substitute. What we should seek to maintain in our denomination, is the more powerful dominion of FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE, compared with which many of those matters which are now rife amongst us, are but of very small importance. Provided however our supreme, constant, and vigilant anxiety be directed to the preservation of vital Christianity, and to that sound doctrine from which alone it can proceed, there is no harm, and will be no danger, in any attention we may pay to matters of religious tastefulness.

My anxiety, notwithstanding all that has been said to dissipate the fears of minds zealous and jealous "for sound doctrine," is still alive on this momentous subject. Others of far stronger intellectual nerve than myself, partake with me in these apprehensions, as will be evident by the following extract from a letter I received from one of the master spirits of the age, whose name, had I permission to give it, would impart oracular weight to his words.

"You are one with me in the deep and powerful conviction that the grandeur, and reality, and simplicity of the Gospel have faded from the view of many around us who still would give their 'yea' to an orthodox and

evangelic confession. It is not *dishonestly* that such a 'yea' would be uttered, but *heartlessly*, and with a reserved feeling of this sort:—'I believe all this, *if* I believe anything; or, I mean to believe it until I have made good my position on another ground.' 'I am orthodox and evangelical *ad interim*.' There are many, I fear, who go on to serve the Gospel as discontented menials do, who take care to give no umbrage until the day when they shall have hired themselves to a master more to their taste. I have painfully felt this in listening to and conversing with young ministers. On the Dissenting side it is one sort of thing, on the Episcopal another—but as to the *result*, it is a departure from, and a disrelish of, the GOSPEL. I am sure you are right in foreseeing the issue—an alienation of heart from the FIRST TRUTHS will end (as to many) in a declared heterodoxy: *this*, or else a hiding the face behind the mask of ritualism. A most impervious and opaque thing, when properly prepared, painted, and varnished, is a papier maché churchism. Wearing this disguise a heart-at-ease atheist may do, say, and seem whatever is convenient.

"Among the Nonconformists the house of refuge is an *intellectualism*, which the people may interpret as they please: a spiritualism in the dialect, of which the old women of the congregation will think they hear what they used to hear, and approve; but which the young men in the crimson-cushioned pews will well know how to render into a philosophy after Hegel, or Miss Martineau, or anybody else.

"And yet while I so write—seeing and hearing what is going on around us—*I do* look for a brighter time: I do not despond, but am hopeful and expectant of good. Whether it may be permitted to me to render service (such as I gladly would render) is with Him to determine with whom is the residue of the Spirit, and the ordering of our lot."

I too am hopeful of good in the end. It is only for a season that I expect, and for a season I *do* expect in our received theology a partial obscuration of the truth as it is in Jesus. A school has risen up at Oxford and elsewhere, in which some of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, especially the atonement and the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament, are, if not absolutely denied, yet undermined. The atonement means, as they teach it, nothing more than a manifestation of Divine love, and the putting away of sin by its moral power over the soul, but which has no reference to the authority and majesty of the law, and the rectitude of the divine government: as held by them, it is merely a wonderful instance of fortitude and patience under suffering of the Man of sorrows, and its whole efficacy lies in the influence of those virtues on the human conscience, but not in his death being an expiation of guilt, a vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God. Mercy, according to their view, is the only attribute of the divine nature displayed in the stupendous transactions of Calvary, while the manifestation of public justice has no provision made for it in their view of the scheme of human redemption. Thus while the name of atonement

is retained, and even that reluctantly, the true scriptural idea as shadowed forth in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and asserted in the pages of the New, is denied and lost. This I fear is the error which is insidiously corrupting the theology of some Episcopalians and Nonconformists. From the writers of this class we hear a great deal about "enlightened and liberal opinions," "a rational interpretation of Scriptures," "freedom from the prejudices of the schools," "extreme views of inspiration," "the narrow prejudices which trammel the noble spirit of theology by creeds and catechisms." And we have been lately told, that "Science is the basis of a rational theology, which is to give the death-blow to superstition." All this high sounding praise of modern illumination, pronounced as it is by men whose genius or whose style gives enchantment to their words, is seductive to those young and ardent minds which are exulting in their freedom from the fetters of old systems, and is I fear leading some astray from the way of truth. But where are the victories and trophies of the men of this school in the conversion of souls, and the sanctification of believers? What aggressions are they making on the realms of ignorance, wickedness and misery? Systems, like men, are to be tried by their fruits. At the same time I am most willing to allow, that by the filtering process of a correct and cautious criticism, to which the old systems of divinity are being subjected, the stream of evangelical truth, as it is held in common by all orthodox churches, is flowing forth more clear from slight admixtures with which it was in some degree impregnated.

It is however, not only from the influence of latitudinarian views on such momenteous subjects as atonement and inspiration; nor only from an adventurous spirit of religious speculation—that danger to religion is to be feared, but from that *intellectualism* in the pulpit to which the writer of the above extract alludes. Perhaps this is less to be dreaded in the evangelical clergy of the Church of England than among the dissenting ministers; not of course for want of ability on their part, or of power on the part of their flocks rightly to appreciate it, but from the deep conviction of their duty to "use great plainness of speech." Among dissenters a highly improved state of education has led to a more elaborate, philosophical, essay-like, and less popular, attractive, and impressive style of preaching. This I know is not a necessary result of a more finished education, but an abuse of it. Ministers may have, should have, ought to have, great stores of knowledge, and yet be "apt to teach." Simplicity of communication is not incompatible with profundity of possession, nor is earnestness opposed to elegance. Where there is no heresy of doctrine, nor even any want of evangelical truth, there may be so much of excessive elaboration, and of "the enticing words of man's wisdom, as to make the cross of Christ of none effect." The gospel may be preached, but with so much of studied intellectualism of style, so much of mere evangelical theory and christian science, and in so heartless a manner, as to be likely to produce little effect. It is too much forgotten, both by preachers and hearers, that it is truth, and not talent

merely, that feeds the soul of the christian; and the truth addressed not only to the intellect, in the way of logical argument, but to the heart and the conscience, with earnest warmth, and urgent importunity. FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE, which are, or ought to be, the great themes of the christian ministry, are something more than matters of theory—theses for the theologian to discuss before an audience. They are matters of eternal life or death, and should be preached as if the preachers believed them to be so. The more talent that is brought to such themes the better, provided it be the object of the talent to make the truth understood, felt, and believed. The gospel is worthy of the noblest intellects, and it is a kind of profanity to touch and teach it ignorantly, carelessly, and feebly. High philosophical and metaphysical intellectualism is indeed a luxury for many; but after all is not so adapted to the mental constitution and spiritual health of the great mass of our congregations, as plainer and simpler food. And is it not by the necessaries and comforts of life,—good, substantial, nutritive diet, that our corporeal frame is nourished and strengthened, rather than by the highly-wrought inventions of the culinary art? A very instructive lesson, but one which preachers are backward to learn, may be gained from those instances which occur now and then, in the history of the church, of a Whitfield and Wesley, for instance, in former times, and a Spurgeon in modern ones; as if to show what kind of preachers are wanted to answer the end of preaching; so far, at least as the conversion of sinners is concerned and is not this the great end of preaching?

We might fairly ask, who are the preachers and what is their style of preaching, by whom the minds of men have been stirred, their hearts changed, and their souls saved? By whom, and by what means, have congregations been raised, churches and chapels built, and other pious men moved to give themselves up to the ministry? How much did the life and labours of Simeon, at Cambridge, contribute to the revival of Evangelical religion in the Church of England, and to the multiplication of her devoted ministers, and let his *Horæ Homileticæ* say by what kind of ministrations these glorious results were wrought out. It is affirmed that the plain and earnest appeals of Richard Knill were the means of the conversion of more than a hundred persons, who, in one way or other, gave themselves to the ministry of the Word, either in this land or abroad. While on the other hand, how many of the most talented, highly cultivated, and intellectual preachers have confessed with bitter lamentations in their latter end, and upon their death-beds, their all but total want of success in the conversion of souls. I am duly aware that conversion is not the only end of preaching, and also that the same kind of preaching is not adapted for conversion in *all* cases. But what is wanted for the great bulk of the people is the earnest popular preaching of *the gospel*;—the power of vigorous thinking in plain language;—a somewhat pictorial style addressed at once to the imagination, the heart, and the conscience, as well as to the judgment—and all this in a lively elocution.

I confess, however, to a little jealousy of some recent schemes for interesting the masses of our population in the subject of religion. I do not presume to judge and condemn those who have adopted them, but I somewhat question their propriety. The gospel of our salvation is so momentous a subject to man's eternal welfare; there is such a dreadful and deadly apathy concerning religion lying on the great mass of the population; the ordinary methods have proved so insufficient to rouse them from their stupor, that I am quite prepared to go considerable lengths in carrying out the apostle's principle, "IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT SAVE SOME." But there is a limit even to this, and there is, I think, a danger of passing it in this age. A craving appetite for novelty and excitement may be created, which will be increased by indulgence, and continually require fresh stimulants; till all extraordinary means fail, and ordinary ones then become flat, tasteless, and neglected. Nothing but the earnest, intelligent, popular, and attractive preaching of the gospel, carried on with a deep sympathy and a loving spirit for the masses of the people, and a multiplication of places for their accommodation, will meet their case.

These remarks will be considered by many a long digression from the subject of my book. I know that in some measure they are. But as I shall not have many more opportunities, if any, of speaking from the press, I have determined to embrace the present one, to give utterance to a few thoughts on some prevailing topics of the day. It may be a feeble testimony I deliver, but it is an earnest and anxious one.

Now, for a short space, I return to the ensuing pages. These pretend to nothing new, original, or eloquent: nothing racy, brilliant, or amusing: nothing for the scholar, philosopher, or even profound theologian: but still much that is true and important: much that by God's grace may be useful to the children of His redeemed family, if indeed they read to profit and not to cavil or to criticise: if, in short, they are really anxious to grow in FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE. And they cannot be christians if they do not. I write plain truths, in plain language, for plain people; and if *they* are profited, I have reached the measure of my ambition.

We sometimes, in the department of the fine arts, meet with a painting that professes to be "after the old masters." It may be very inferior, but it has something of their subject, spirit, and manner. I make a similar pretension, and have written this book after "the old *authors*;" and under the humbling consciousness of its immeasurable inferiority, am in no danger of being proud of my success. I am a warm but discriminating admirer of those great men of the seventeenth century, especially of Hall, Taylor, and Barrow, among the Episcopalians, and Howe, Baxter, and some works of Owen, among the Nonconformists. I am aware of their faults—but, O, their matchless excellences! How much would it conduce to the usefulness of their preaching, and the edification of their flocks, if our young ministers made themselves more acquainted with the immortal productions of these illustrious men; and uniting their affluence of

thought with modern accuracy and elegance, this would give that power to the pulpit, which at present, in the opinion of many, it has lost.

If any of the readers of this volume should have perused my work, entitled "The Course of Faith,"* they will find some few repetitions of the thoughts, and perhaps of the language, contained in that work—especially in the chapters on Assurance and Heaven. It was impossible to avoid this, as the graces of faith and hope touch each other in some points so closely. So also there will be found occasional repetitions in one part of what was stated in others: a thought or a text being expanded in one place, which was only glanced at in another. The different aspects or relations of Hope, though on some points dissimilar, are in others alike. Repetitions, however, are not always redundances: they abound in Scripture.

J. A. J.

* A new edition of this work is just published.

CHAPTER I.

ON HOPE, CONSIDERED GENERALLY.

History tells us that Alexander, when setting out on one of his expeditions of conquest, distributed his gratuities with such lavish profusion as to lead to the question from one of his friends, "What he reserved for himself?" His reply was, "Hope." It was a noble response from a lofty mind, and has served from that day to the present, as an inspiration to others, not merely when coveting and seeking some desired object, but in the lowest ebb of adversity, and as a stimulus to the pursuit of brighter days and happier scenes. Few men are so content and satisfied with their present circumstances as not to wish and seek an augmentation of their felicity. Men live more upon the past and the future, than upon the present. Their memory and their hope are the chief sources of their happiness. Poetry has seized upon both these as the subject of its verse, and while one author has sung "The Pleasures of Memory" the muse of the other has chosen as its theme "The Pleasures of Hope."

Perhaps there is no passion so generally indulged as hope. Its subjects are men of all classes from the peasant to the prince; for none are sunk so low as to be beneath its reach, nor are any elevated so high as to be above its influence. The savage and the sage; the wild man of the woods, whose desires go not beyond the catching of his

prey or the gratification of his appetites; the philosopher whose expectations sublimely extend to some grand discovery in science; are all alike under the power of this passion. Its beams add splendour to the palace and enliven the gloom of the cottage. The monarch has something more to desire, and the most forlorn child of penury, something yet to expect. It is thus a merciful provision in the construction of our nature, and so powerful as well as general is its influence, that many indulge it for themselves, when none else can for them. And as it is all but universal as regards its subjects, so is it also, in reference to its occasions. Other passions operate by starts in particular circumstances, or in certain parts of life, but hope seems to begin with the first dawn of reason, at the very commencement of our capability to compare our actual with our possible state. The babe at his mother's breast, when craving with hunger in sight of the supply for his wants, though he has not yet learnt to express his desires and expectations in articulate language, nor to put his passions into words, has hope, and expresses it by a cry and a look; it is then as strong as in manhood. We can recollect the desires of our early years, when we had only trifles to wish for; but trifles which were as important to us then as the more splendid baubles that were probably to occupy, with a change of follies, our maturer ambition. "Gay hope is theirs," is one of the expressions in reference to the happiness of boyhood in Gray's well known ode.

Other passions change or cease as situations change and circumstances vary; but this never. And human life seems rather a transition from hope to hope, than from pleasure to pleasure, for very few sit down contentedly to enjoy what they have, but are ever restless to gain something which they have not.

Hope is the mainspring of human action, the lunar influence that keeps the tide of human affairs in perpetual and healthy motion. Without this all things would settle down into an offensive and pestiferous stagnancy. It impels to labour, sustains it, and makes its fatigues tolerable. It is the parent of enterprise, the impulse of ambition, and the nerve of resolution. Stop any man in any department of activity, and in any stage of his career, and ask him what is his motive for such laborious exertion, such self-denying sacrifices, such untiring efforts, and you will find that he is urged through his weary course by hope. Let the last ray of this expire and all this energy will as certainly and immediately stop as the piston in the cylinder of the engine when the steam pressure ceases and the whole machinery is still. The labourer continues day by day at his toil, wiping away the sweat of his brow, in hope of his wages at the end of the week; the tradesman, manufacturer and merchant are all animated by the same impulse; the scholar and philosopher pursue their studies under the same influence; the warrior and the statesman, the sailor and the traveller, are all one in the motive power of their conduct, however the objects may differ. And were an inhabitant of another world to survey from the upper regions of the atmosphere one daily revolution of our globe on its axis, and after surveying the endless diversity of human pursuits, the busy activities of our race, the intense anxiety, the indomitable earnestness, and the untiring labours, with which all their pursuits were carried on, and were to ask the question, "What is it that keeps all these countless millions in such restless motion?" the answer would be—Hope. Let this take her flight from our world, and her guiding, inspiring and fostering influence be withdrawn, and all this scene of vital activity would become an

inert mass, a region of mortal quiescence, a dead sea in which nothing could live.

But that which is the mainspring of exertion is also the consolation of the distressed. Why even the *prosperous* find hope necessary to their enjoyment. *Their* life, whatever accumulation of the gifts of Providence it may contain, would still be wretched were it not elevated and delighted by the hope of some new possession, of some enjoyment yet behind, by which the wish shall be at last satisfied, and the heart filled up to its utmost extent. And if hope be necessary to the enjoyment of the sons and daughters of prosperity, how much more to those of adversity and sorrow. What is it that enables the tradesman oppressed by declining fortunes to go on amidst disappointment and defeat? Hope that the tide in his affairs will soon turn and prosperity flow. What is it that sustains the sufferer, to whom sleepless nights and painful days are allotted, to bear his sufferings with patience and fortitude? Hope that the hour of recovery and ease will soon come. What is it that helps the poor captive to endure the gloom of the dungeon? Hope that his release will arrive? How beautifully is this expressed by Dr. Thomas Brown: "If we could see all the wild visions of future deliverance, which rise, not to the dreams merely, but to the waking thought of the galley slave, who has been condemned to the oar for life, we should see indeed what it might seem madness to every heart but his, to which these visions are in some measure like the momentary possession of the freedom of which he is to be for ever deprived; and in this very madness of credulous expectation, so admirably adapted to a misery that admits of no earthly expectation which reason can justify, we would see at once the omnipotence of the principle of hope, and the benevolence of Him who has fixed

that principle in our mind to be the comfort of even despair itself, or at least of miseries, of which all but the miserable themselves *would* despair." In all the varieties of human suffering there are few however that are aggravated and embittered by absolute despair. This blessed passion enters the scene of sorrow with her cup of consolation for almost every lip, her precious balm for every wound, and in the great hospital of bodily and mental maladies, passes like a ministering angel from couch to couch, causing her own smiles to be reflected from the countenances of her patients, and her words of consolation to be echoed from their lips, instead of sighs and groans. How many sighs are every day stifled, and how many tears are every night wiped away by hope. There is no happiness then, which hope cannot promise, no difficulty which it cannot surmount, no grief which it cannot mitigate. It is the wealth of the indigent, the health of the sick, the freedom of the captive, the panacea for all our wants, and the grand catholicon for all our woes.

There can exist no doubt, that though this passion, like all the rest, is implanted by God in our nature, and will be found in every human heart, yet it is stronger in some hearts than in others. Physical organization has something to do with all the faculties of the soul, and with the passions among the rest, which are developed with greater readiness and force in some than in others. We see some naturally, instinctively hopeful and buoyant, always prone to look at the bright side of things, haunted by no spectres of fear, never despondent while a twig remains on which the hand of hope can lay hold, and following the least glimmering ray. Happy natures! Let those who possess them be thankful for this precious boon of Providence. A hopeful mind is one of the greatest blessings of life, and

contributes more towards the happiness of our existence than rank, wealth or fame. On the contrary, there are those whose material organization predisposes the mind to fear, timidity, and despondency. In some cases this deepens into almost settled gloom. There is no doubt that this as to absolute recovery is incurable. Still, even as in bodily disease, mitigation may be obtained, where a perfect cure is not to be looked for; so in mental tendencies arising from what are called disordered nerves, a therapeutic treatment may be adopted, which may greatly alleviate the disorder which it cannot remove. The passions may all be made subject to discipline; may be all nurtured or repressed. It is of immense importance to know this. Mental tendencies may be controlled. Let those who dwell only in the border country of hope, whose tendency is to despondency and gloom, and who are prone to look on the dark side of things; who in venturing into the shadowy regions of futurity, rarely see anything but shapes and forms of evil; whose vaticinations are all, like those of Cassandra, of evil things, learn that this state of mind is more within the reach of remedies than they imagine. Let them not yield themselves up the unresisting captives of this sad distemper. They must struggle against this morbid tendency to fear, and gloom, and despondency. If the soil of their nature be unfriendly to the growth of hope, they must do as good farmers do with their bad soils; that is, bestow more skill and labour upon the cultivation. Such ground will not of course be ever so prolific as better land, but it may be much improved, and made to be remunerative. So a gloomy and despondingmind may be greatly improved, and though it may never even in temporal matters attain to the full assurance of hope, may yet acquire a greater measure of it. Des-

pondency will grow like every thing else, with indulgence; and so will hope. Bodily health has something to do with this, and whatever can strengthen the constitution will tend to remove a tendency to depression. Early rising, plenty of exercise, attention to diet, constant occupation, watchfulness against the disheartening passions of the soul, will by the blessing of God, go a great way towards counteracting a tendency to gloom and despondency, and strengthening a hopeful disposition. Even in matters of religion, good people are not aware how many of their doubts and fears, their dark and gloomy states of mind, are produced by physical derangement. Hope *may* be cultivated then: but the misfortune is, that they who stand most in need of this cultivation, are least disposed to undertake it. There is a sluggishness about such persons which it is difficult to rouse. It is hard, I know, to hope against hope, and requires an effort of mind, a determination of will, which persons in this state of mind, are very much disinclined to make; yet, as it is essential to their comfort and well-being, it is what they should endeavour to accomplish.

As hope from its very nature is so great and urgent a power in the human mind, it requires, like the dynamics of mechanical force, to be placed under a proper direction and control. When injudicious in its choice of objects, and unrestrained in its impulses, what wild projects it has formed, what insane schemes it has devised, and on what mad enterprizes has it adventured! How many of its dupes, after they have blown their soon exploded bubbles, has it led to ruin? The *follies* of hope might form a theme for the moralist, as well as its pleasures to the poet. Well and wisely therefore should we hold the reins of this passion. True it is, that even its

frustrations are better than its extinction; but these may be avoided by a little caution. Dr. Johnson in one of those ingenious allegories with which he has adorned and enlivened the pages of his Rambler,* has one which he calls the "Garden of Hope," in which this passion is represented as seated upon an eminence, while a vast multitude are seen pressing on to obtain the gifts which the goddess has to bestow. Each supposing that her smile was directed specially to himself, and triumphing in his own superiority to others, who had conceived the same confidence from the same mistake. The entrance to the garden was by two gates, Reason and Fancy. From the gate of Reason there was an ascent by the strait of Difficulty, up which they who were wise and cautious, were led by the hand of Fortitude. These received the prize from the hand of the goddess, and were led by Wisdom to the bowers of Content. The rest who had not entered by the gate of Reason, retired with regret and disappointment. Let us then take care that in seeking the gifts of hope, we enter the garden by the gate of Reason.

Reason will lead us to take care that the objects of our hope are worth the pains we take to possess them. It is for a lamentation to see on what worthless objects multitudes are exhausting their energies. What miserable trifles inflame their desires and raise their expectations! How wise and how necessary, before we fix our hope upon anything, is it to pause and ask, "Will it by fruition remunerate me for the expenditure of time, ease, and money?" Another exercise of reason in regard to hope is, to inquire if its object is attainable. I know that the

* To both Addison and Johnson I am indebted for some of the ideas in this chapter.

illusion of desire is so strong, that many consider objects within their reach, which all besides perceive to be utterly unattainable. I am not forgetful that very many either from an excess of timidity, from a lethargic indolence, or a stupid indifference, lose opportunities for promoting their interests which providence has thrown in their way. They cry in idleness, "There is no hope;" and do nothing because they expect nothing. "*Expect great things, attempt great things,*" is a motto, the inspiration of which has raised multitudes from poverty and obscurity, to wealth and importance. The man who has soul enough to hope for something great, possesses in part the means for obtaining it. Still there is a limit to the attainableness of an object, and a wise man will consider where the terminus is fixed; and will not waste his energies in seeking to pass it. Many have lost objects which were attainable, in hoping for those which were *un*attainable; and have thus made themselves the martyrs of disappointment, when with more wisdom and moderation, they might have been the happy partakers of success.

Great care should be taken to guard against the illusions of imagination. Addison gives a somewhat amusing but a striking illustration of this, in the following fable:—"Alnaschar was a very idle man, that never would set his hand to any business during his father's life. When his father died, he left him to the value of a hundred drachmas in Persian money. Alnaschar, in order to make the best of it, laid it out in glasses, bottles, and finest earthenware. These he piled up in a large open basket, and having made choice of a very little shop, placed the basket at his feet, and leaned his back against the wall in the expectation of customers. As he sat in

this position, with his eyes upon the basket, he fell into a most amusing train of thought, and was overheard by one of his neighbours as he talked to himself in the following manner: 'This basket,' says he, 'cost me a hundred drachmas, which is all I have in the world. I shall quickly make two hundred of it. These two hundred drachmas will in a very little while rise to four hundred, which will of course amount in time to four thousand. Four thousand drachmas cannot fail of making eight thousand. As soon as by these means I am master of ten thousand, I will lay aside my trade of glassman, and turn jeweller. I shall then deal in diamonds, pearls, and all sorts of rich stones. When I have got together as much wealth as I can well desire, I will make a purchase of the finest house I can find, with lands, slaves, and horses. I shall then begin to enjoy myself, and make a noise in the world. I will not, however, stop there, but still continue my traffic, till I have got together a hundred thousand drachmas. When I have got a hundred thousand drachmas, I shall naturally set myself on the footing of a prince, and will demand the grand vizier's daughter in marriage. I will let him know at the same time that it is my intention to make him a present of a thousand pieces of gold on my marriage.'

"Alnaschar was entirely swallowed up in this chimerical vision of imaginary hopes, when putting out his foot, he unluckily struck the basket of brittle ware, which was the foundation of all his grandeur, and kicking the glasses into the middle of the street, broke them into ten thousand pieces."

Few, it will be admitted, carry up this baseless structure of imaginary hope to such a height as did the self-

deluded Persian. But how many, in *their* measure, deceive themselves with vain imaginations. Hope, more than almost any other passion, is addicted to this practice of building castles in the air. It tells a flattering tale, which credulity loves to listen to, and though its fallacious promises have so often failed, yet as men love to be deceived, they still hearken to its mendacious voice.

It is by no means my intention to lessen the influence, but only to guide the operations, of this solace of affliction and stimulus of industry; not to weaken its power within the sphere of possibilities, but only to prevent its energies from being exhausted on impossibilities. It is too valuable a thing to be wasted on unattainables. It is wanted for objects which may be gained by it, and cannot be gained without it. We should guard as much as possible from employing it on things which lie beyond our reach, since it is then sure to be disappointed, and every fresh disappointment weakens its spring, even for objects which may be legitimately considered as within its sphere; while every instance of success encourages fresh exertion and leads on to other achievements. "If we hope for things which are at too great a distance from us, it is possible we may be intercepted by death in our progress towards them. If we hope for things we have not thoroughly considered the value of, our disappointment will be greater than our pleasure in the fruition of them. If we hope for what we are not likely to possess, we act and think in vain, and make life a greater dream and shadow than it really is. Many of the miseries and misfortunes of life proceed from our want of consideration, in one or all of these particulars. They are the rocks on which the sanguine tribe of lovers daily split, and on

which the bankrupt, the politician, the alchymist, and the projector, are cast away in every age. Men of warm imaginations and towering thoughts are apt to overlook the goods of fortune which are near them, for something that glitters in their sight at a distance; to neglect solid and substantial happiness for what is showy and superficial; and to contemn the good which is within their reach, for that which they are not capable of attaining."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE, AND ITS DISTINCTION FROM FAITH AND LOVE.

ALL Christians are not metaphysicians, nor is it necessary, either for their safety or their sanctity, that they should be. Philosophy has done little for theology but to corrupt it; and yet a sound philosophy must ever be in harmony with a sound theology. A clear view of our mental economy would help us to clearer views, if not of the doctrines of Christianity, yet of the best method of reducing them to practice in our daily walk. A correct analysis of our spiritual nature in all its faculties, besides the gratification which a knowledge of the science of ourselves will never fail to impart, will be some assistance to us in carrying forward and advancing to a higher perfection the duties of the divine life. A philosophical view of the nature of hope, will therefore be of some service to us in guiding its exercises.

Hope is not a simple, but a complex passion, and consists of the desire of some object, the expectation of obtaining it, together with that joy which arises from both these. Its basis may be said to be desire, which may exist in different forms, according to the degree of probability of the attainment of its object. When there is little, if *any* probability, it constitutes, what is termed, a mere *wish*; when the probability is stronger, it connects

itself with expectation, and becomes hope; and with probability that amounts almost to certainty, it settle into confidence. Desire, without expectation, is despair expectation, without desire, is dread. Strong desir with faint expectation, is feeble hope; but with confiden expectation, is assurance. These distinctions will b found to be of some service in the christian life, a shewing what states of mind to cultivate, in order to th full enjoyment of Christian privilege. For instance,—i order to "a lively hope," it is not only necessary t inflame desire after spiritual blessings; but also t strengthen expectation. We must not only see that thes things are necessary, but attainable, and attainable by us and as this persuasion of attainableness constitutes faitl in order to strengthen hope, we must increase in faitl And as expectation is never likely to be excited without sense of the desireableness of its object, if we would rous up a lively expectation, we must first kindle an intens desire. It is when the soul has a longing desire afte future glory, and a confident expectation of it, that it rise in hope, till it reaches to a full assurance.

The object of hope must be something *good*, and some thing *future*. No one by possibility can desire what i evil—or to speak with greater precision, what appears t be evil. Good, or *apparent* good, must be the object o hope. Here, it will be perceived, it differs from faith which may and does believe in what is evil as well a what is good. Christian faith has respect to all th threatnings of God, no less than to his promises; bu hope has respect only to his invitations and promises.

Hope must have respect to some *future* good, as th apostle has most correctly said, "Hope that is seen is no hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope fo

it?"—Rom. viii. 24. Here again it differs both from faith and love, for these may have existence in relation to a present object. But while differing in some views from these graces, it has a resemblance to them in others. Hope resembles faith in regard to expectation, "Faith," says the apostle, "is the substance (or confident expectation) of things hoped for."—Heb. xii. 1. There can be neither faith nor hope where there is no expectation. This is an important remark as bearing on Christian experience. Many persons imagine, and it can be but imagination, that they really believe in Christ, whilst they have no expectation of salvation. This is impossible. Expectation is at once the exercise and the evidence of faith; and faith is strong or weak according to the degree of expectation. The same may be said of hope. And as hope touches faith on the side of expectation, so it touches love on the side of desire. There can be no love where there is no desire; and in proportion to the fervour of love, is the strength and intensity of desire. *This* also may be said of hope.

Hope resembles these two kindred graces in another particular, and that is in joy. We read, and I trust we feel, that there is "joy and peace in believing;" and we read also of "the comfort of love:" and does not the apostle speak of "Rejoicing in hope?" Holy joy is the evidence of both faith and hope. If there be no consolation in the troubled breast, can there be any belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, or a confident expectation of glory everlasting?

How beautifully do the graces of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the Christian, like the colours of the rainbow, soften down into one another. Look at that glorious ethereal arch, and separate the colours, if you can, by a

visible line of demarcation. The eye cannot tell where each begins and ends; and as the union of all these forms the pure white light of day, so the union of faith, hope, and love, though distinct graces, yet blending together, forms the piety of the real Christian.

And as these graces are homogeneous in nature, they are harmonious in their exercise; like certain strings of music, touch one, and the others vibrate. They are a trinity in unity, which cannot be separated and exist apart. We cannot really believe and not love, for "faith worketh by love;" nor can we love without faith, for love is the fruit of faith, and the fruit cannot be produced without the tree. So neither can we hope without faith, for hope is the desire and expectation of something promised. And then see how love excites hope, for if we love Christ, shall we not long to be with him, and that in exact proportion as our love to him is intense? This relation to each other, and the operation of the graces in producing, or at any rate, strengthening each other, is beautifully described by the apostle, where he says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access into this grace, wherein we now stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."—Rom. v. 1-5.

The Root of the other two graces is faith. The gospel brings us the glad tidings of salvation, by the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The message meets the ear, is unfolded to the understanding, and applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. Conviction of sin is produced, and an earnest desire after pardon, peace, and eternal life is felt. But this desire is not yet hope, for

the poor distressed soul is in doubt and fear of his acceptance with God. He cannot yet attain to a blissful expectation. Wandering about in gloom and anxiety, he is yet a stranger to joy, to hope, to love; in fact, a stranger to everything but sin, sorrow, and alarm. He desires salvation, but dares not expect it, and therefore, of course, cannot hope for it. Why not? Simply because he does not believe the glad news that Christ died for him as well, and as really, and as much, as for others. His sins are felt to be too great to be pardoned, or there is something else necessary to obtain their pardon. At length further light and teaching from the divine comforter and illuminator leads him to see that he is included in the objects of divine mercy, and invited to partake of its rich benefits. He believes in Christ, and now what follows? Hope. He now *expects* to be forgiven—to be saved. The promise holds up the blessing, faith believes it; hope not only desires, but looks for it. "Yes," says the poor distracted sinner, "I believe that God has loved me, that Christ has died for me; that *I* am invited to him; and now my doubts and fears are scattered, and I expect salvation." Thus you see, that faith believes the great object attainable, and hope desires and expects it. It is well to see this connection between faith and hope, not only at the outset of the christian life, but through all its future progress. Can I hope for any favour from one on whom I have no claim, if he has not promised it, or does not exhibit in his character and usual conduct some ground for my expectation—for my faith? And if he promise me, can I hope till I believe his promise: and if I believe, shall I *not* hope? This is so plain that it scarcely needs either confirmation or illustration. Yet it is so important to see the

connection between faith and hope, that one or two examples may be here cited. I refer the reader to the case of Abraham—Romans iv. 16, 21. If he will turn to the passage, he will see that concerning the promised seed "he believed, and against hope believed in hope." Here the faith and the hope are proportionals. As he *believed* the promise which was contrary to nature, so he *hoped* for what was contrary to nature. So again it is said of Moses, "Who by faith refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter," "for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." He believed the promise of God, and he hoped for the things promised. Another instance of this may be seen in Paul—Romans viii. 33-39; where we see the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope connected; the one arising from the other, and both blending into one delightful sentiment of triumphant confidence. Some Christians complain of the feebleness of their hope, and want it to be in livelier exercise. The object of their desires appears dim and distant, and their expectations of it tremulous and fluctuating. Fear often prevails and deepens into despondency. What would they give for a clearer view, and a more animated anticipation of divine and heavenly realities; but alas! they know not how to obtain it. They seek, but do not find it; pray, but do not get it; wait, but it does not come. The secret is easily found. Their faith is weak. They do not grasp the promise. They give way to their doubts, and their fears must of necessity rise and prevail. Fear is the shadow of doubt; and hope the sunshine of faith. Let us be more conversant with the terms of the promise and the attributes of the promiser. Let us weigh the evidences of the [illegible]th of the word of God, and then make ourselves fami-

liar with his omnipotence and immutability, and we shall be strong in hope when we are strong in faith.

And now love will of necessity follow the exercise of the other two. Can I really believe that Christ loves *me* with all that wondrous benevolence which brought him from heaven to earth; made him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; led him to agonise in Gethsemane, and expire on the cross for *me*: and not love him in return? Is this the only exception to the rule which says, that love begets love? Shall we not on the contrary say, and feel what we say, "We love him, because he first loved us? And does not hope equally inflame love? When I range over the prospects of eternal life and glory; when I survey the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; when by sanctified imagination I walk through the new Jerusalem, and see her streets of gold, her gates of pearl, her foundations all of precious stones; when I see her glorified population, and hear their anthems of praise, their songs of delight; when I see the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from it; and the tree of life on the banks of the river, with its twelve kinds of fruits, and all this shining brightly with the glory of God; and then say, I hope for all this; all this is *my* future possession—shall I not love Him who has given me this good hope, this everlasting consolation?"

We see in all this the connection of the graces of true religion, their mutual dependence and influence upon each other. They all spring from the same principle of grace in the soul, and are the action of the same spiritual life. In the tree there are the root, the trunk, the branch, the leaf, the fruit; yet all nourished from the soil, and

mutually dependent and operative. In the flower there are the root, the stem, the petal, the fragrance; yet all sustained by the same principle of vegetable vitality. In the human body there is the variety of organs and limbs; yet all united to the head, and by receiving influence from that, and being fully "joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body." So is it in the soul, and its holy dispositions; there is variety of parts and of functions, yet unity of construction and operation. If we believe, there is the operation of the principle of renewing and sanctifying grace; if we hope, there is the operation of the same principle; and if we love, there is also the same. There are not only diversities of gifts, the working of the self-same Spirit in the same church, but diversities of operations of the Spirit in the individual Christian.

Is there not something to be gathered from this, affecting the experience of the believer, and auxiliary to his consolation in those painful exercises of soul to which he is liable in his present state of discipline and probation? Seasons of gloom, depression and doubt, do occur in the history of most Christians, and more frequently in the life of some than others. I would be far from writing any thing that would tend to nourish those morbid conditions of the soul, and there is an injudicious mode of treating them which *has* this tendency. Still I would do any thing to comfort the perturbed heart under them, and lead that heart out of its perplexities. Such a person is sometimes troubled because he cannot find *all* the graces in full and vigorous action; at others, because he cannot find some one that has specially engaged his attention. Sometimes

he doubts of his state, because his faith is weak; at others, because his hope is dull; and at others, because his love is lukewarm. "Is it faith," says good old Gurnall, "that thou hast been looking after, and it has not been heard of; well, Christian, do not presently unsaint thyself, till thou hast made further trial of thyself. Send out, therefore, thy spies to search for some other grace, as thy love for Christ; may be thou wilt hear some tidings of this grace, though the other is not in view. Has not thy love to Christ been seen by thee in such a temptation, chasing it away with Joseph's answer: 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Yea, mayest thou not see it all the day long, either in thy sincere care to please him, or hearty sorrow when thou hast done any thing that grieves him? in which two veins runs the life's blood of a soul's love to Christ. Now, know to thy comfort, that thy love can tell thee news of thy faith. But may be thy love to Christ is lodged in a cloud. Well, then, see whether thou cannot spy no evangelical repentance loading thee with the sight of thy sins, as also in firing thee with revenge against them, as those enemies which drew thee into rebellion against God. Behold the grace thou lookest after stands by thee; for what is love to God, if zeal against sin, which is God's enemy, be not?"

Now this goes upon the supposition, which is a true one, that all the graces of the renewed soul are in every soul that is truly renewed, and that the existence of one, implies all the rest, though one may be more fully developed, or at least more clearly ascertained in one person than in another, and in the same person at different times and stages of his religious experience.

There is another thing to be observed in reference to

these states of the sanctified mind, that they are very closely connected in their growth and decay. We would again borrow our illustration from vegetable and animal life. When the young sapling grows, it is, in all its parts, the root, the trunk, the branch, the leaf, the fruit: so in the human body, as to its various limbs, the increase of one is also the increase of the other. And like this, generally, is the process of decay. Observe the process of decline in the human frame under the wasting power of consumption. The signs and proofs of emaciation are visible in every part. And in other cases a diseased limb may impart disease to the whole body. So it is in the new creature, the spiritual man, when faith grows, hope and love grow with it; and when love decays, faith and hope will decay at the same time. Here again is a source of instruction, warning, and caution. The christian must be watchful over the state and condition of his whole soul, just as a person who would maintain good health must be attentive to all the organs of his body: not only guard against blindness, but take care of his hearing; nor guard against consumption, but against fever; and while he looks well to his power of walking, not neglect the muscles of his arms, and especially be observant of diseases of the head, and of the heart. Ah, this is what is wanted to our spiritual health—a recollection that a deficiency of action or disease in one grace, may lead to the same things in others: we should look well to the whole new nature. If one grace begins to weaken, we should instantly take alarm lest the decay extend to others, and the whole man become weak and sickly. If our faith in Christ or heaven grow feeble, let us tremble lest our hope of our eternal life diminish, and we sink into an earthly and

lukewarm condition. If our love become lukewarm, our hope will languish, and the decay of both will act back upon our faith. Our spiritual life is so fine and delicate a thing, that one deficiency left unsupplied, one little sin unmortified, may be attended with most serious consequences. Decay is always progressive in its tendency. A single stone falling out of a wall, if the hole be not stopped, may lead to the falling out of one stone after another, till the whole tumbles down. A single beam in a roof infected with the dry rot, may, if suffered to remain, extend to all the timbers, till the whole falls in. Attention must therefore be paid to all the graces of the Spirit; for if one be neglected, the rest will suffer. But on the other hand, for our encouragement, we may recollect that the cultivation and strengthening of one power is the growth of all the rest. While we are growing in faith, we are growing in hope and love. It is well, however, to endeavour to ascertain in which of the three our deficiency is likely to lie, and from the deficiency in which our chief danger is likely to arise, that we may direct our attention with especial care to the weak parts. Just as we do in our bodily health; whatever organ or limb is more likely than the rest to be affected, to that we direct our chief solicitude and care. As regards our states of mind, we have our constitutional tendencies, our besetting sins. One christian is more tempted to a weak faith, another to a languid hope, and another to a lukewarm affection. We should know *our* tendencies; in order to this, we should study ourselves. What science is so valuable to us, as the science of our own hearts? Yet, how few possess it! With all the opportunities and incentives to obtain this self-knowledge which they possess, how small is the num-

ber which make any proficiency in it! Some are wilfully ignorant; they desire not to know their ownselves; they shun acquaintance with their own hearts. Others are carelessly ignorant; they treat their own souls, in spiritual matters, with a thoughtlessness and levity which are truly pitiable. Even good people are far greater strangers at home in themselves than they ought to be. The whole concern of religion is of such momentous importance, the great discipline and probation for eternity are of such tremendous consequence, that nothing should be neglected which has a bearing upon it. And how can we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling if we do not know towards which of the besetting sins in the christian life our tendency lies.

Such then, I mean the union and exercise of those three graces, faith, hope, and love, is the true religion of Jesus Christ. "Now," said the apostle, "*abideth* these three;" as much as to say, amidst all the changes of external administration, after the cessation of many things, such as miracles, granted only for a temporary purpose; and after the rejection of many things which are the officious meddling and divers inventions of man's carnal wisdom; these will ever remain the soul and substance of the Gospel scheme. No change of administration will nullify or weaken these; no devices of an ingenious and busy superstition will supersede these; no mysticism or pietism will ever render these secondary matters in the christian life. As long as there is a church on earth, these will remain the vital, essential, substantial elements of true evangelical piety.

It is worthy the observation of all times, and especially of the present age, how little is said in the New Testament about rites and ceremonies, and even of

sacraments and the Sabbath, compared with what is said about faith, hope, and love. The ritualists must go back to the ceremonial law of Moses to find their system, and spirit, and prevailing practice; for the teaching of Christ and his apostles relates to other and higher matters. These things, it is true, have their place; the Sabbath and the sacraments are indeed inculcated; but where in the gospels and epistles do we find the remotest hint of all that paraphernalia of ritualism, those pantomimic services, and spiritual histrionics, which constitute so large a portion of the worship of the Church of Rome, and of those who have the folly to imitate her practice, without the honesty to assume her profession! Where do we find that all but endless enumeration of saints' days, fasts, and festivals, which in that corrupt communion is made the essence of piety, and which, if observed, would rob the nation of so large a portion of the productive industry of its population, without elevating their religion, or improving their morals! How strange a contrast does the religion of a Popish chapel, or Puseyite church, present to that of Paul, Peter, James, or John. Surely, if all that the Papists and Tractarians prescribe as necessary to acceptable worship be indeed required, how deficient is the Bible as a rule of faith and practice, and how far short are the teachings of inspiration of what we need on such matters for our guidance.

How admirable and how true are the words of John Smith, that fine Christian Platonist: "But, alas, I doubt we generally arrive not at this pitch of religion to deny the world and all the glory and pomp of this largely extended train of VANITY, but we easily content ourselves with some *external* forms of religion. We are

too apt to look at a garish dress and attire of religion, to be enamoured rather with some more specious and seemingly spiritual forms, than with the spirit and power of godliness and religion itself. We are more taken commonly with the several fashions that the luxuriant fancies of men are apt to contrive for it, than with the real power and simplicity thereof, and while we think ourselves to be growing in our knowledge, and moving on towards a state of perfection, we do but turn up and down from one form to another; we are as apt still to draw it down into as low, worldly, and mundane rites and ordinances, as ever it was before our Saviour made that glorious reformation therein, which took away these material crutches, made up of carnal ordinances, which earthly minds lean so much upon, and are found to underprop their religion with, which else would tumble down and fall to nothing."

If faith, hope, and love constitute the vital elements of true religion, and we know they do—what a view do they afford us of its nobleness and excellence. How clearly does it appear that it is not like the prophet's roll, sweet as honey in the mouth and bitter as gall in the belly. It is no sullen stoicism, no sour pharisaism. It does not consist in a few gloomy rites or melancholy passions, in dejected looks, lugubrious lamentations and mental depressions; but it consists in freedom, love, peace, life, and power. In its rise and origin, it comes from heaven, and is ever moving towards it. The man who pursues it lives above the world and all its mundane delights and excellences, in converse with his own reason and his God. He receives an influence *from* God which carries him back *to* God. The very faculties of his soul are strengthened by it in their exercise, and

the sphere of their operation widened, and the objects of their contemplation not only multiplied but elevated into sublimity. By faith, and hope, and love he acquires a just power over himself, achieves the noblest victories over all that is low, sinful, and worldly in his nature, and rises into the puissant state, not only of a moral hero, but of a confessor, and, if need be, a martyr. By a religion formed of these graces he renounces the mean and unworthy ends for which the multitude around him live, escapes the imprisonment of an abject selfishness, and by seeking to glorify God, enters into a sympathy and fellowship with Him in the ends of his conduct and the pursuit of his schemes. Faith, and hope, and love, all lead his soul to God as the source of his happiness, the model of his character, and the supreme object of his existence, and thus unite him with the Author of his being. It is utterly impossible that such a religion should not beget in him the greatest serenity and composedness of mind, and the purest and most satisfying pleasures of soul. Each of these graces, by itself and all united, have this effect upon his happy spirit. His religion is the commencement of an eternal progress in moral excellence, for though faith and hope will cease, love will remain for ever. To this bliss he is ever carried forward by the impulses and aspirations of hope; which, when he reaches it, will land him on a shore where perfect and eternal felicity will arise out of a perfect and eternal sanctity. True religion, then, the religion of faith, hope, and love, is no mere mechanical, artificial, ritual, external thing, not "the boiling up of our imaginative powers, nor the glowing heats of passion, though these two are often mistaken for it, when in our jugglings of religion we cast a mist before our own eyes; but it is a new nature

informing the souls of men; it is a godlike frame of spirit discovering itself, most of all, in serene and clear minds, in deep humility, meekness, self-denial, universal love of God, and all true goodness, without partiality and without hypocrisy, whereby we are taught to know God, and, knowing, to love Him, and conform ourselves as much as may be to all that perfection which shines forth in Him."

I have lately met with the following parable, in prose-poetry, of the relation and influence of Faith and Hope, which, if evangelised, may be as instructive to the judgment, and as useful to the heart, as it is pleasing to the imagination.

"One morning as the sun arose, two spirits went forth upon the earth.

"And they were sisters; but Faith was of mature age, while Hope was yet a child.

"They were both beautiful. Some loved to gaze upon the countenance of Faith, for her eye was serene, and her beauty changed not; but Hope was the delight of every heart.

"And the child sported in the freshness of the morning; and as she hovered over the gardens and dewy lawns, her wings glittered in the sunbeams like the rainbow.

"'Come, my sister,' she cried, 'and chase with me this butterfly from flower to flower?'

"But her sister was gazing at the lark as it arose from its low nest and warbled among the clouds.

"And when it was noon, the child said again, 'Come, my sister, and pluck with me the flowers of the garden, for they are beautiful, and their fragrance is sweet.'

"But Faith replied, 'Nay, my sister, let the flowers

be thine, for thou art young, and delightest thyself in their beauty. I will meditate in the shade till the heat of the day be past. Thou wilt find me by the fountain in the forest. When thou art weary, come and repose on my bosom.' And she smiled and departed.

"After a time Hope sought her sister. The tear was in her eye, and her countenance was mournful.

"Then Faith said, 'My sister, wherefore dost thou weep, and why is thy countenance sad?'

"And the child answered, 'Because a cloud is in the sky, and the sunshine is overcast. See, the rain begins to fall.'

"'It is but a shower,' Faith replied, 'and when it is over the fields will be greener than before.'

"Now the place where they sat was sheltered from the rain, as it had been from the noontide heat. And Faith comforted the child, and showed her how the waters flowed with a fuller and clearer stream as the shower fell.

"And presently the sun broke out again, and the woods resounded with song.

"Then Hope was glad, and went forth to her sports once more.

"After a time the sky was again darkened, and the young spirit looked up, and behold! there was no cloud in the whole circle of the heavens.

"Therefore Hope marvelled, for it was not yet night.

"And she fled to her sister, and cast herself down at her feet, and trembled exceedingly.

"Then Faith raised the child, and led her forth from the shade of the trees, and pointed to the sun, and said,

"'A shadow is passing over the face thereof, but no

ray of his glory is extinguished. He still walketh in brightness, and thou shalt again delight thyself in his beams. See, even yet his face is not wholly hidden from us.'

"But the child dare not look up, for the gloom struck upon her heart. And when all was bright again she feared to wander from her sister, and her sports were less gay than before.

"When the eventide was come, Faith went forth from the forest shade, and sought the lawn, where she might watch the setting of the sun.

"Then said she to her young sister, 'Come and behold how far the glories of the sunset transcend the beauties of the morning. See how softly they melt away and give place to the shadows of the night.'

"But Hope was now weary, her eye was heavy, and her voice languid. She folded her radiant wings, and dropped on her sister's bosom, and fell asleep.

"But Faith watched through the night, she was never weary, nor did her eyelids need repose.

"She laid the child on a bed of flowers, and kissed her cheek. She also drew her mantle round the head of the sleeper, that she might sleep in peace.

"Then Faith looked upwards, and beheld how the stars came forth. She traced them in their radiant courses, and listened to their harmonies, which mortal ear hath not heard.

"And as she listened, their music entranced her soul.

"At length a light appeared in the east, and the sun burst forth from the portals of the heavens. Then the spirit hastened to arouse the young sleeper.

"'Awake! O my sister! awake!' she cried; 'a new

day hath dawned, and no cloud shall overshadow it. Awake! for the sun hath arisen which shall set no more.'" *

Now what is the moral of this ingenious and pleasing parable? That faith and hope are naturally related and inseparably united; that faith is the strength of hope, can clear up its difficulties, chase away its apprehensions, revive its languors, inflame its desires, and confirm its expectations. Yes, and more than this, for it shows us that when hope falls into slumber, it is faith that awakens it from its sleep, and points it to the rising and unsetting sun of Heaven's eternal day. There are, however, one or two things in the piece which are not quite correct, inasmuch as it represents hope as too young a sister, too childish, and too earthly; for hope in Jesus and in heaven, though the younger sister of faith, is nearly of the same age, and instead of chasing the butterfly and plucking the flowers, gazes not only at the lark and listens to its warblings, but looks up to the sky into which it soars. Still the beautiful and poetic lesson is, that faith in Christ and heaven sustains our hope of both; that faith is the guardian of hope, and that when our hope wanders from the side of faith, it must, of necessity, fall into doubt, and fear, and gloom.

* "Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Preachers, and Politicians."

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDATION OF HOPE.

"It is a fearful thing," says a distinguished writer, "for an immortal being to have no hope for eternity, but it is scarcely less dreadful to have a hope,—it may be a confident hope,—which, if there be any truth in the Bible, must make him who cherishes it ashamed and confounded, world without end."* Hence the necessity and tremendous importance of looking well to the foundation on which we rest our expectations of everlasting happiness. Every wise builder will take especial care, when he is about to erect an edifice, that the foundation is good, and his solicitude will be in exact proportion to the magnitude, height, and importance of the intended structure. Our Lord closes his Sermon upon the Mount with an allusion to this, where he speaks of the different results of building upon the sand or upon a rock. What deep anxiety, then, should be felt by him whose superstructure of hope is to rise as high as heaven, to stand against all the assaults of time, and to last through eternity. What is a palace, a pyramid, a castle, or a temple, compared with this?

> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, yea, the great globe itself,
> With all which it inherits, shall dissolve,
> And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
> Leave not a rack behind.

* Dr. John Brown.

But the superstructure of a believer's hope, if well based, shall outlive this whole material frame, and at length converted into full and blessed fruition, shall exist for ever. But how awful the consideration that, if ill-placed, he will see all his expectations vanish in a moment, and will sink to the depths of despair, when he looked for ineffable and eternal enjoyment.

Every hope must rest upon something. To desire and *expect* a future good without some ground for it, is a folly men are very rarely guilty of; though very common is the folly, very near akin to it, of indulging in anticipations which rest upon the sand.

When we consider the object of Christian hope, its unmeasurable vastness, its infinite glory, and its eternal duration, and consider also that this is an expectation cherished by a creature so mean and so sinful as man, it seems indeed, at first sight, a high presumption to anticipate such an eternal destiny. To see a man guilty of a thousand sins, and depraved in his nature, pointing up to heaven, and on to eternity, and hear him say, "I am looking for all that," is something very surprising. Surely such a man ought to look well to the basis on which rest such high expectations. In searching for this basis, we must be guided exclusively by Scripture. It is not what man says, but what God says. It is not by the teaching of philosophy, but by the revelations of Scripture, that we can come to a knowledge of this. Speculation will not do here. Conjecture is worthless here. We know nothing about heaven itself, and can know nothing about the way to it, but what the Bible tells us. Woe, eternal woe, to the man who sets aside the testimony of inspiration, and ventures forward into the darkness of the invisible world with no better light

than the glimmering taper of his own reason; while blessed is the man who, in his progress to eternity, says, "Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path," and who is guided by the light of this heaven-kindled lamp to his everlasting home.

And what *does* this inspired and infallible record say? In one short, simple, beautiful passage, which he that runs may read, the whole matter is summarily expressed. The apostle thus commences his first epistle to Timothy, —"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH IS OUR HOPE." The same view is presented in another much misunderstood passage, I mean Col. i., 27.,— "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" It is usual to consider the Apostle as referring to the indwelling of Christ in the heart, forming his image there, and new creating the soul by his Spirit. But is the work of Christ *in* us, or the work of Christ *for* us, the foundation of our hope? Is it Christ, subjectively or objectively, on which we found our hope? If it be Christ *in* us, then our dependance is upon something of our own. The true translation is "Christ *among* you;" set forth before you, exhibited to you in the preaching of the word. This rendering is given in those bibles which have marginal references.

The Lord Jesus Christ our hope! These few precious words deserve to be written in letters of gold, to be engraven on every rock where mortals could read them, to have monumental pillars erected in every abode of lost sinners and mortal men to bear the glorious inscription,—yea, to be printed in starry characters on the sky, that men may look upward from the sins and sorrows of time, the ravages of death, and the extinction of their earthly expectations, and read them with raptures of

delight. Yet, since they are written on the imperishable page of Scripture, this is unnecessary; for there they are presented in legible characters to the eye of every man that has a bible. *The Lord Jesus Christ our hope.* It is blissful to repeat it. Yes, there *is* hope for lost sinful man, and Christ is that hope. Hear it, ye children of mortality, who all your life, "through fear of death, are subject to bondage." Hear it, ye tribes of the earth, "groaning and travailing in pain together until now." Hear it, ye subjects of incurable disease, casting longing, lingering looks behind, as ye bend your steps, weak and weary, yet reluctant, towards the gloomy vale from which none return, —there is hope of immortality, and Christ is that hope. This is plainly told us in another place,—"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,"—I Cor. iii, 11. So again even in the prophetic scriptures it is said, "Behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation,"—Isaiah xxviii, 16. This is quoted by the apostle Peter, 1st Epistle, ii, 4,—"To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."

But it will be necessary here to explain in what sense Christ is the foundation of hope. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and thus heaven is forfeited by us all. "There is none righteous, no not one." No man can now hope for eternal happiness on the ground of his own obedience. Every one has not only forfeited heaven, by his personal transgression, but deserved hell. The fall, so far as what man can do for himself, extinguished hope for ever. The gate of Paradise above is as truly closed and barred against him, as regards his own ability to open it, as was the gate of

Paradise on earth to Adam after his apostacy. If it be ever opened again to the children of men, it must be done by God's own hand. If ever the hope of immortality be kindled in the bosom of man, it must be by God himself. His infinite benignity desired to open the closed gates, and render heaven accessible to guilty men. But how can he do it consistently with his truth, which declared death should be the punishment of sin? With his holiness, which must demonstrate itself before the universe, as opposed to sin, and infinitely hating it? With his justice, which must manifest itself, by inflicting the threatened and deserved punishment? How can he do it in harmony with the wisdom and authority of his law? How can he do it and uphold the principles of his moral government, and the majesty of his throne be maintained? Can he open heaven to the aspirations, the pursuit, and the possession of the apostate race of Adam? Will not the inhabitants of Paradise retire or stand aghast when they see such rebels entering? Will not the moral universe be perplexed by such a seeming eclipse of God's infinite holiness and justice, and feel as if his mercy had demolished the throne of his majesty, and raised her seat upon the ruins of rectitude? And yet it is a fact that God *has* opened the kingdom of heaven to the children of men. How shall harmony then be restored to the seemingly jarring attributes of justice and of mercy? The apostle explains the mystery in that wondrous language,—"Ye are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the

justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."—Rom. iii., 24—26. Glorious passage! Wondrous language! Divine light is here seen throwing its splendour back upon the dark shadows of the Levitical law, and all the dispensations of grace since the fall of man; extending its illumination to the mystic terms of the revelation to our first parents in the garden; explaining the words of the prophet, as well as the symbols of the priest; exhibiting the moral law given in thunder from Sinai, in all its unviolated authority; covering with a flood of radiance the throne of the eternal Governor of the universe; and yet at the same time proclaiming the mercy of God in all its fullness and freeness, and thus laying the foundation of hope for the vilest sinner upon earth. Yes, the atonement of Christ, the real all-sufficient and complete atonement of Christ; the atonement, in its true sacrificial intent, as a means of manifesting the glory, by satisfying the claims, of divine justice; that only doctrine which can give meaning to Scripture, glory to God, and hope to man; without which Judaism is an insoluble enigma, and Christianity a contradiction. This, this is the foundation, the only foundation of a sinner's hope, and a saint's consolation. This is expressed in innumerable passages of both the Old Testament and the New. Isaiah declared it in the verse already quoted, and in another no less clear and explicit, where he says, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him: the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and by his stripes we are healed."—chap. liii. Jeremiah declared it where he calls him "the Lord our Righteousness."—xxxiii, 16. Daniel declared it where he speaks of Messiah as "finishing transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting

righteousness."—ix, 24. And Zechariah declared it where he speaks of a "a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," xiii, 1. In all these passages, and very many others, is Christ set forth as the foundation of our hope; the ground on which we are to rest all our expectations of eternal salvation.

A more extended and minute consideration of one of these passages may now with propriety be introduced, as furnishing us with a most instructive, encouraging, and consolatory view of the foundation of the christian's hope. I mean the language of Isaiah, xxviii, 16, "Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone." That this applies to Christ is certain by its being so used by the apostle Peter, 1st epistle, 2nd chapter. There may be also an allusion by the apostle, in this passage, to Psalm cxviii, 22:—"The stone which the builders disallowed is become the headstone of the corner."* The force of the metaphors in all these passages is much enhanced by the statements of modern travellers in relation to the immense stones which the ancients were accustomed to place in the foundations of their temples and walls, some of which are remaining to the present day. In Robinson's Palestine mention is made of this in reference to the walls of Jerusalem, in which he conjectures is still found some of the masonry of the very temple built by Solomon, consisting of vast blocks: and in the foundations of the temple at Balbec,

* The English readers will perceive in this case, as in many others, a verbal difference between the quotation in the New Testament and the original passage in the Old Testament, in explanation of which it may be observed that the writers of the former generally quote the Septuagint or Greek version of the Jewish Scriptures, and sometimes they give neither the Hebrew nor Greek in exact words, but in the way of substance or paraphrase.

now for ages in ruins, stones have been found measuring seventy feet long by fifteen thick.

One of the greatest of the Nonconformist divines* published a wonderful treatise under the title of "The Living Temple." His design is to represent the soul of man as originally created to be a temple for an indwelling deity, by the fall reduced to ruins, and restored by the mediation of Christ. A long passage from this extraordinary production of sanctified genius will be acceptable to every reader, and manifest the intellectual majesty of its author. Speaking of the original temples, he says:—"The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear on their front, yet extant, this doleful inscription, 'HERE GOD ONCE DWELT.' Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man to shew the divine presence did some time reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity to proclaim, he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned, the light and love are now vanished, the one of which did once shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour. The golden candlestick is displaced and thrown away as an useless thing to make room for the throne of the prince of darkness. The sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour, and instead of a sweet savour, there is a stench. The comely order of the house is turned into confusion; the beauties of holiness into noisome impurities; the house of prayer into a den of thieves, and that of the worst and most horrid kind, for every lust is a thief, and every theft sacrilege. Continual rapine and robbery are committed upon holy things. The

* John Howe.

noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplations and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed unto vile intuitions and embraces, to behold and admire lying vanities, to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness. What, have not the enemies done wickedly in the sanctuary? How have they broken down the carved work thereof, and that too, with axes and hammers, the noise whereof was not to be heard in the building? Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of the great king; the relics of common notions; the lively prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things, the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold, with what accuracy the broken pieces shew themselves to have been graven by the finger of God, and how now they lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish. You come amidst all this confusion as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying useless and neglected among heaps of dirt. He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect, and doth but say to you, "*Behold the desolation,*"—all things rude and waste. Why is it thus? The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple too plainly show *the great inhabitant is gone.*"

But let us now glance at a few of the beauties of the apostle's vivid description of this basis of our immortal hopes.

Behold, saith God, "*I* lay in Zion a stone." This declaration is worth worlds, since it imports that the

whole work of man's redemption is of God's planning, executing, and proposing. It is no matter of human device or angelic suggestion; the wondrous conception sprang up in the intellect and heart of God, or rather, was there from all eternity. "*God* so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life." "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In building our hope on Christ, we are resting it where God has directed us to place it. It was God that sent Christ; God that qualified him for his work; God that sustained him through it; God that raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand. All, all is divine, and therefore all is secure. None *can* be lost who place themselves on that foundation, which God himself has laid. Let the believer rejoice in his security. Noah was not more safe in the ark which was built under divine direction, when God shut him in, than the christian is who has trusted his eternal all to Christ. God guarantees his safety. He may boldly say, "Lord, I am where *thou* has directed me to place my foot. I have laid hold of thy hand, and I cannot perish, unless thou lettest me go, which thou hast promised never to do."

And then dwell upon that word, a *stone*: not sand, which may shift; not earth, which may sink; not wood, which may rot; but *a stone*, and not a small, inconsiderable stone, which may be crushed, but a *rock*. So said Christ to Peter, "On this *rock* will I build my church."* In Christ there is every thing to constitute

* That it was not Peter's person, but Peter's confession, that is the truth of Christ's Messiahship, that our Lord meant, is evident from his

an all-sufficiency to bear the hopes of his universal church. A man resting his weary limbs, and building his hope of repose and safety on the mightiest mountain in our globe, may as rationally fear that the granite mass would sink beneath his weight, as the man who is building upon Christ may fear that the basis of his expectations will fail him. This, and this only, is rock, and all besides is sand, or mud, clay, or stubble.

This stone is *elect*, chosen by infinite wisdom for the purpose, and altogether fit for it. The wise master-builder is careful not only to choose a good kind of stone for his foundation, but the best of its kind. This word is evidently intended as a translation of the Hebrew phrase, a "tried stone." All things among men are chosen after trial. Experiments are made, when great weights are to be suspended, or great pressure endured, whether the material employed will be sufficiently strong for the purpose. In the present case there needed no tentative process. The Lord Jesus was accurately known to his divine Father to be every way fitted for his work. As man, he was perfect, and had no sins of his own to atone for, and had a body given to him to offer up in sacrifice, while as God he gave to this act of sacrifice an infinite value. Millions upon millions in faith of God's judgment have ventured to build their hopes on this foundation; and who ever found it insufficient? All the hosts of hell, all the powers of darkness, infidels, heretics, and philosophers, have endeavoured to subvert it, but it has

singularly striking change of words. Peter is from the Greek word *petros*, which signifies merely a *stone*: but *pétra*, which is the term our Lord uses in reference to the foundation of his church, signifies a *rock*. As if he had said, "I build it not on thee, Peter, for thou art but a stone, but upon the rock of my divine mission."

defied their efforts. Not the slightest chip of this indestructible basis have they detached from the mighty mass. Let the enlightened christian say if *he* has not tried it and found it sufficient. Let the dying believer testify and say if *he* does not find it enough in the prospect of eternity. Let the palm-bearing multitude, which no man can number round the throne, bear witness, if it has not been found upon trial, enough for their safety.

It is *a chief corner stone;* it is the stone in the angle of the building, on which the two walls meet and unite, and which, therefore, gives compactness and strength to the edifice. It is in Christ that Jew and Gentile are associated; it is in him that all meet and become a building fitly framed and compacted together.

Another quality mentioned is that this stone is "*precious.*" How true! Yes, inestimably precious. "The Deity filling his human nature with all manner of grace in its highest perfection, made him infinitely precious and excellent. Not only was he thus precious and excellent in himself, but he is of precious virtue, which he lets forth and imparts to others; of such virtue that a touch of him is the only cure of spiritual diseases. Men tell of strange virtues of some stones, but it is certain that this precious stone has not only virtue to heal the sick, but even to raise the dead." Dead bodies he raised during his abode upon earth, and dead souls he doth still raise, by the power of his word. Precious is Christ to his Heavenly Father; precious to all angels in glory; and who can better tell of his infinite value than those who have built upon it their immortal hopes, and find continually how happy they are who believe in him.

And shall I forget the other property, so strange, so seemingly unnatural, "*a living stone!*" What a conspicu-

ous place in the Scripture does that word LIFE sustain, and especially in connection with our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ and life seem to be almost convertible terms; "I am the *life*," he said more than once; he is the living vine, the living head, living bread, and living water, and here is a living *stone*, than which nothing seemed farther from vitality. Had there been discovered a stone of such mysterious power that whatever dead substances were placed upon it should immediately be made alive, for what a wonder would it stand in God's universe. Here in a figurative sense is the very thing. Here is a *living* stone, which has not only life itself, but imparts it to all brought into contact with it. Our translators have unnecessarily and unwisely interpreted the original, in application to Christ by a participle, and in application to believers, by an adverb, calling Christ the *living* stone, and christians *lively* stones; whereas it is the same word in the original in both places. They have thus marred the beauty, and weakened the force of the passage. It is the Spirit's design to represent believers not only as *lively*, but as *living*, and deriving all vitality from their connexion with Christ.

Now after this description of, and encomium upon, the foundation of his hope, let the believer exult, as he well may in his security. Let him see the force of the apostle's exhortation, "*Rejoice in hope.*" Let him take the lamp and go down and survey the basis of his high and glorious expectations, and repose with confidence on the foundation which God has laid in Zion.

If this be, as we know it is, the only ground on which we can depend for everlasting life, how vain and ruinous are all those refuges of lies to which so many betake themselves against the wrath to come. It is a dreadful thing to be deceiving ourselves in a matter

of such tremendous importance as that of eternal life. I will, therefore, with the intention of guarding men against this fatal error, point out some of the prevailing mistakes on this subject.

Some are buoying up their expectations with *a vague reliance on the benignity of the divine nature.* They have taken up false, because partial, views of the character of God; and abusing the apostle's declaration "that God is love," misinterpret this sublime description of deity, as if it implied that pure and infinite benevolence could never consign his creatures to eternal misery. We might fairly ask how they know that God is merciful; and if they answer that scripture declares it, they should recollect that the same scripture tells them "he will by no means clear the guilty;" and that if there be a thousand promises to the penitent believer, there are a thousand threatenings against the impenitent unbeliever. We know nothing of God's goodness, but from the same source as we know of his justice. If we look to God's Providence, we see indeed in our own comforts many proofs and displays of his kindness; but we see also in our *dis*comforts many displays of his justice. If criminals, why so many enjoyments; if favorites, why so many sufferings? Justice, if God be a perfect moral being, must be as essential an attribute of his nature as mercy, and "as no perfection of the divine character can be manifested in a manner incompatible with any other perfection, even though no revelation had been given on the subject, it must have been, to say the least of it, so exceedingly doubtful whether such an exercise of benignity as the pardon and salvation of a sinner, be reconcilable with righteousness, as to make it, in the highest degree, irrational to rest a

hope of final happiness on such a supposition."* Such people merge all God's other attributes in his mercy. They cannot claim, says Dr. Guthrie, originality for this idea. Its authorship belongs to the "father of lies."—Satan said so before them. It is the identical doctrine that damned the world. The serpent said to the woman, "Thou shall not surely die." Do not rest your hope on such a baseless fancy.

Others go still further in their presumption, and rest their hopes even upon *the equity of God.* They may possibly be not only free from vice, but living in the practice of many virtues. They may present a striking contrast to the infidels and profligates around them by all the moralities and decorum of conventional goodness; but having altogether incorrect notions of the spirituality, extent and obligations of the moral law, as the rule of human conduct, and notions not more correct of themselves as regards the state of their hearts, they imagine that their good deeds so far counterbalance their bad ones, that it would be injustice in God to destroy them. Their expectations of salvation rest then upon their own doings, and they seek to be justified by their works. Instead of resting exclusively, as taught to do, upon the righteousness of Christ, they go about to establish their own righteousness. With the fig-leaf apron of their own good deeds, and, as they suppose, better intentions, they seek to cover their moral nakedness, and avert the stroke of divine justice.

Not a few, and especially those who are called to endure the privations of poverty, and the various ills often connected with it, are indulging the vain idea *that having suffered so much in this life, they shall be exempted*

*Dr. John Brown.

from all suffering in the next, and shall, like Lazarus, be carried by a convoy of angels to heaven. What inadequate views does such a mistake evince of the evil nature of sin, the justice of God, and the multitude of their transgressions. No. A life as long as that of Methuselah, spent in all the destitution and disease of Job upon the dunghill, would be no atonement for sin, and afford no ground to depend upon for salvation.

Church relationship and privileges, ever since the time of the Jews, who cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we," have constituted a basis of hope to multitudes. They have been much more anxious to find the true church than the true Saviour, and have made, in fact, the church their Saviour. This is the pernicious and destructive error of the followers of Anti-Christ. Theirs is, in their opinion, the true church, and all that are in the true church are safe. The church guarantees the safety of her children, and the poor deluded creatures are satisfied with her bond. And are there not multitudes in other churches, besides that of Rome, who are indulging in the same fatal delusion? They have been made christians, they suppose, by baptismal regeneration—have been acknowledged such by confirmation—have been sealed by the Sacrament, and are thus brought within the bonds of the covenant. And how many, in voluntary unestablished churches, are relying upon their public profession and union with the church. Alas, alas! in how many cases is a hollow and inconsistent profession the sole ground of dependence for eternity! How many have no other evidence that they are true christians, than their profession that they *are* such, backed by the admission of those who have received them to fellowship and the table of the Lord. This

admission is considered and used by them as a certificate of personal religion, the badge of discipleship, which, as it has received the seal of the minister of the church on earth, will not be disputed as a passport to the church in heaven. I pen these lines with a deep and sorrowful conviction that I am describing the melancholy condition of large numbers in all our churches, who find their counterpart in those of whom our Lord speaks, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."—Matt. vii. 21-23. These terrific words should sound through the whole church with the solemnity and impressiveness of an alarm bell. What a salutary fear and trembling they should awaken! To what a close and anxious examination they should lead! Mistaken professors are going by myriads to perdition. Myriads and myriads are walking to eternity over the rotten plank of a formal and insincere profession, which will break beneath their feet, and let them fall into the burning gulf below. In several of my works I have spoken of these deluded professors, and will never cease to sound the note of warning. For not only is it a dreadful thing to go down to the pit with a lying profession, but a *possible* thing; not only a possible case, but a *certain* one; and not only a certain one, but a *common* one. Let the reader of these pages see to it, that he is not one who is *only* a professor.

Perhaps there is a still more subtle, if not more

dangerous deception than even this; and that is, the case of those who are relying upon the religious exercises of their own minds for their salvation. They renounce all dependence upon their external works, but are relying upon their internal state. Some are laying hold of their orthodoxy, the clearness of their views, the correctness of their knowledge, the scripturalness of their opinions. Sound doctrine we know is important, it is the source of all pious feeling, and all holy conduct: but apart from pious feeling and holy conduct, will no more save us than correct notions of astronomy or geography. It is not the doctrine about Christ we are to depend upon, but Christ himself. Then there is with some a reliance upon the *act of faith*. It is a belief of their own belief, rather than a belief in Christ, they look to. Their object of faith is their own faith. Their faith does not lead them to Christ, but stands between them and Christ. They forget that we are not saved *for* our faith, but *by* it. Perhaps this is the most subtle working of unbelief of all. Persons of an imaginative, sensitive, or emotional character, are prone to rest their hope on their *feelings*. Their feelings are the barometer that indicates their confidence, which rises and falls with emotional pressure. If lively in prayer, if rapturous in joy, if profuse in tears, if strong in impression, they are full of hope; but, with the least variation of feeling, they are all doubt, fear, and despondency. They little consider, for they little know, how much all this depends upon the state of another barometer than that which they hang up in their own variable humanity. This is a very insidious and seductive method of keeping our soul from the true foundation. There is no more merit in our emotions, than in our actions; and we have no more warrant to depend upon

the former, than we have upon the latter. Christ out of ourselves, and apart from ourselves, is the only foundation; and we must go out of ourselves, and away from ourselves, to depend upon him. It is for want of seeing this in the early stages of religious concern, that so many are kept so long in a state, in some cases, of delusive peace, and in others, of unrelieved anxiety. And it is to this also, that real believers, true christians, are to trace those perturbations of mind, those alternations of hope and fear, elevations and depressions, to which, to their great distress, they are so liable. Did they but keep their eye steadily fixed on Christ, and less microscopically upon their own feelings, their peace would be less disturbed, and their joy far more settled and abundant.

And let it here be distinctly understood, and ever remembered, that nothing can alter, add to, or diminish this foundation. Could the believer live on earth to the age of Methuselah, could he fill those nine centuries with the most unblemished holiness, the richest christian experience, the most zealous labours, and the most diffusive charities, all this would not add a single stone, or a particle of strength, to this foundation. Even then, his dependence for salvation must be as exclusive and entire upon Christ as at the first moment when he came to him for pardon; or as that of the dying thief upon the cross, who had not a single good action on which to place any dependance. And the real Christian knows and feels this. As he is closing the long series of holy actions which have filled up his life, as he looks back upon the past now about to be lost in the eternal future, and is standing upon the threshold of his "Father's house," and expects every moment the door to open, he exclaims with gratitude and humility,

"Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me. My hope, my only hope is in thee."

But there is another thing to be taken into account when speaking of the foundation of christian hope, and that is *the promise of God.* How is it we are able to assure *ourselves* that *we* can build upon this basis of the Saviour's infinite merits? If I know that an individual has done something for *my* future benefit in common with the welfare of many others, I still want his assurance that I shall reap the advantage of what he has done. Hence though we *believe* that Christ died as a ransom for all, and is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, yet I need his *positive assurance* that I shall reap the advantage of this wondrous work of mediation. I have it: "He that believeth, and whosoever believeth, shall be saved." It is not a probability or a peradventure, but a positive certainty; God has said it. A thousand promises declare it. The firmanent of the New Testament is studded with them. They come out upon our view thick and shining like the stars of heaven on a clear and cloudless night. The design of the death of Christ was to make an atonement for sin; and God's promise is that we, each one of us individually, shall partake of the blessed result of these sufferings of Christ. Here is the ground of our expectation; and in speaking of this expectation, the promises of God must always be united with the merits of the Saviour. And even this is not all, for we must also have an entire faith in the power, and unchangeableness, and faithfulness of God to fulfil his promise. Notwithstanding the atoning death of Christ, notwithstanding the promise of God, if we could doubt the divine power, fidelity, and immutability, we should still

find we had no solid base on which to rest our expectations of eternal life. Now again we say, look at your foundation, the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, the promise of God, who cannot lie, and the infinite attributes of the divine nature, and "Rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

CHAPTER IV.

THE OBJECT OF HOPE.

THE exercise of hope necessarily supposes an object. We could as soon conceive of an effect without a cause, as a hope without an object. It means, as we have shewn, the desire and expectation of something which the mind apprehends at the time to be both desirable and probable. It is the soul's act in coveting, reaching after, and looking for, something future and something good. Now what *is* the object of Christian hope?

First.—Viewing it in its widest latitude of meaning, hope may contemplate, and be considered as exercised in regard to, many things even in this world. Any future good yet to be possessed and enjoyed in reference to our religious state and well-being, may be an object of hope. Is some important and difficult duty to be performed at a future time, it is an object of hope to be enabled by divine help to discharge it. Here is something good, something future, and something to be both desired and expected. Or is some affliction seen looming with portentous form and aspect in the distance, then to be sustained under it, and carried through it, is a future good to be desired and expected, and is therefore an object of hope. Or is there the appearance of some spiritual good of any kind seen in futurity, and some ground to expect it, here also is an object of hope. In

short, in this view of the matter, hope runs through the whole course of our spiritual as well as our natural life.

It is in this reference the word is generally, if not universally, used in the Old Testament. The future state, though not totally unrevealed under the Mosaic economy, was touched upon with extraordinary reserve, rarely proposed as an object of hope, and as rarely employed as a motive to righteous conduct. In the Jewish Theocracy, which was in fact an earthly government, administered by God as its political sovereign, temporal and national blessings, and immediate divine interpositions for bestowing them, were the objects of the hopes of the Jews as such. Hence, see the language, which will be found in Hosea ii, 5—9, and very many other passages of the prophets. It is true GOD is said to be their hope, but this means that their desires and expectations of future good things rested on his promise and perfections. I do not say that the pious and intelligent Jew had *no* hope of eternal glory. I believe he had; but I mean that the hope spoken of in the Old Testament generally referred not to this, but to temporal benefits.

Secondly.—Christian hope, in its most general exercise, refers also to those great events which belong to the kingdom of Christ on earth, and which are promised in the Word of God. Such, for instance, as the following:

The conversion and restoration of the Jews. This is an event set forth in many passages of the Old Testament, and in a few of the New Testament,—Luke xx, 24, Romans xi. This is confidently expected by nearly all professing christians. They may not, and do not, agree as to the mode or the time in which this is to be done, nor whether they will be restored to their own land; but, with few exceptions, they expect their conversion to

Christ. Is it not surprising that among these exceptions should be found Martin Luther, whose strong, coarse language on this subject astonishes us? "A Jewish heart," he says, "is so stock, stone, iron, devil hard, that it can in no wise be moved. They are young devils, damned to hell. To convert these devil's brats, as some fondly dream, out of the epistle to the Romans, is impossible." In these revolting words the great Reformer, who filled the world with astonishment at the strength of his faith in God, shews how the mightiest believer, who has the strength of a giant, may sometimes have the weakness of a child. Had he forgotten the conversion of three thousand Jews under one sermon; or the history of other conversions? The conversion of the Jews impossible! Marvellous unbelief, after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus! O Luther, thou whose faith shook the Vatican to its foundation, hast now that faith shaken by the hard-heartedness of a Jew! If *thou* hadst no hope of this, blessed be God, thou standest almost alone in thy stubborn despair.

The conversion of the Jews is an event transcendently interesting in itself, and must be followed with such important results, not only to their own nation, but to all the nations of the earth, that it ought to occupy a much larger share of attention among professing christians than I fear it does. I deplore it, while I scarcely know how to account for it, that this subject should interest the Nonconformist bodies, both Wesleyan Methodists and Dissenters, much less than it does the pious members of the Church of England. It is not, I think, to their credit that the seed of Abraham, the descendants of apostles, and the nation of whom, "as concerning the flesh," our Lord came, should, in the present state of

the Jews, receive so little of their sympathy, and so small a share of benevolent and zealous co-operation for their conversion. And why is this? Because they have so little hope concerning them. It cannot be justly pleaded, in excuse for this indifference, that they are waiting for the visible manifestation and personal reign of Christ, when the nation will be converted by miracle; for among them there are very few who hold what is called the pre-millenarian scheme. And it is a little remarkable that those who *do* hold this view of prophetic Scripture, and expect a national conversion of the Jews, at, and by, the second advent of our Lord, should be the most zealous *now* for their individual gathering; thus indicating how much and how laudably their heart is set on this blessed consummation. What a glorious and important event will it be, whenever and however it will take place. How firmly should we believe it, how confidently hope for it, how earnestly pray for it, and how unweariedly labour for it.

Connected with this, as an object of christian hope, is *the conversion of the Gentile nations.* Who that makes any pretension either to the love of God or man, or that has any concern for truth and righteousness, or that has any regard even for the civilization of the human race, can survey the moral condition of the world at this moment with any other feelings than those of the apostle, when his spirit was stirred at Athens, "to see the city wholly given to idolatry?" In the object that moved his whole spiritual nature to pity, indignation, and grief, there was much to veil the moral deformity of the scene. Philosophy threw over it the covering of its schools, its sages, and its systems. Architecture and sculpture adorned it with their most exquisite productions. History enriched it with the most exciting associations.

Eloquence and oratory emblazoned it with their magic fascinations; and yet, with all this, it was *idolatry*; and therefore none of these things could either change or conceal its nature, or reconcile Paul's mind to its abominations. What then should be our feelings now in looking over six hundred millions of idolators, most of them sunk in a superstition which, while it insults heaven with its wickedness, disfigures, defiles, and degrades the earth with its barbaric shapes of vulgar and horrid deformity. The idolatry of our day has everything to disgust our taste, as well as to shock our piety.

Here then is the object of christian compassion, heathendom in its present condition; and here the object of christian hope, heathendom in its future renewed and christian state. How infinitely desirable is the conversion of all these nations to Christ; how desirable for this wilderness, where every poisonous weed grows, and every ravenous beast roams, to rejoice and blossom as the rose; for this desert to be converted into the garden of the Lord; for all these nations to be restored to Christ, to be made subject to his sceptre, and obedient to his laws. How is it we do not more intensely long for this glorious change? How is it we can be so contented to go on as we now do? With an unconverted world in our eye, and a converted one in our hope, it would seem as if we should deem all the efforts of christian zeal now made by our various societies, as no better than lukewarmness, as only a mere apology for the true missionary spirit.

And as this is an object of *desire*, so is it also of *expectation*. We are not left to only one half of hope, to *desire* a consummation which we have no reason to anticipate. We have the revealed purpose, the declared intention, the fixed, unalterable, and uncontrollable resolution of God, to

change the condition of the whole earth: these nations *are* to be converted to Christ. To quote texts in proof of this would be to fill pages with them. David tells us "That all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the people shall worship before him," Psalm xxii, 27. Isaiah says, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," chap. xi, 6. Jeremiah assures us that the time shall come when "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know ye the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least even unto the greatest," chap. xxxi, 24, Heb. viii, 11. Ezekiel informs us that the "living waters shall come forth from the temple, and flow through the earth, and that every thing shall live where the river comes," chap. xlvii. Daniel tells us that "the stone cut out of the mountain shall fill the whole earth," chap. ii, 35. Haggai says that God "will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," chap. ii, 7. Zechariah speaks of "living waters going out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And Jehovah shall be king over all the earth; and in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one," chap. xiv, 8, 9. And Malachi, when about to close the book of Old Testament prophecy, thus writes, "From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, says Jehovah, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense and a pure offering shall be offered to my name: for my name shall be great among the heathen," chap. i, 11. Nor is the New Testament silent on the subject. How explicit is the language of the Apostle Paul in Rom. xi,

where he speaks of the conversion both of the Jews and of the Gentiles. In that delightful chapter, his object is to prove that though at that time the *nation* of the Jews, as such, was cast off, yet that their rejection was neither total nor final; for there was an election of grace then of all who believed in Christ, and were received into the church, and that the time would come when the nation as such would be restored and grafted into the true olive tree. "Blindness in part," he says, "has happened unto Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.*" So that we gather from these words, that there is still to be a conversion of the Gentiles, compared with which all that has yet taken place, shall be only as a small measure of ingathering, not the fulness, for this fulness is not to come till the Jews are to be converted. Some doubt may exist as to which of these events will take precedence of the other. I am inclined to think that there will be a considerable ingathering of the Gentiles prior to the general conversion of the Jews; that then, when the Gentile world has sunk into a lukewarm and comparatively dead state, the Jews will be converted, and their conversion will then act upon the Gentile world with such a power as to be as life from the dead. Then will come the fulness of the heathen into the church of Christ. Let the redeemed church rise up then in the eager attitude of joyous anticipation. Let her shake off her remaining sloth. When the hand of God has rent by prophecy the veil of futurity, and actually shows us the earth reposing in millennial peace, and shining with millennial splendour, under the sceptre of Christ, when the song of Jubilee poured forth by a regenerated world, is already heard by the ear of faith, shall hope be low and languid?

But another part of the object of christian hope, as regards the earthly prospects of the church, is *the downfall and utter subversion of Mahommedanism*. The three great works of the devil are Idolatry, Mahommedanism, and Popery; and it is probable that their destruction will be contemporaneous. The rise, progress, and wide extension of the Mahommedan power have been a matter of perplexity to many minds, as neutralising the argument for the divine authority of Christianity, arising from its great diffusion. The success of the Arabian impostor, however, is easily accounted for, by the adaptation of the doctrines, precepts, and institutions of his religion, to the prejudices and inclinations of the tribes among whom they were first promulgated; by the ignorance, semi-barbarism, and minute division of these Arabian hordes; and above all, by the resistless force of his conquering arms. The Koran or death was his watchword. "But if we carefully attend to the nature of the religion of Christ, the means by which it was propagated, and the opposition it had to encounter, we must be convinced that its speedy and extensive reception, are facts which can be only satisfactorily accounted for on the supposition that this religion is true, and has been in all ages the peculiar object of the favourable superintendence of the Governor of the world. But its principles and precepts, its doctrines and duties, are opposed to the strongest prejudices and wishes of the depraved understanding and heart. Its doctrines are equally removed from the absurdities of the popular faith, and the refinements of the schools of philosophy, and its injunctions are at open variance with the strongest passions of fallen human nature. Mahommedanism was propagated by the

sword, Christianity only by persuasion."* How beautiful is this contrast drawn by Bishop Sherlock:—

"Go to your natural religion; lay before her Mohammed and his disciples arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands and tens of thousands who fell by his victorious sword; show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirements; show her the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives; let her see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and his divine commission to justify his lust and his oppression. When she is tired with this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table to view his poor fare and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her see him injured, but not provoked; let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; and let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors; 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

"When natural religion has viewed both, ask which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already heard; when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at the cross; by him she spake and said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God.'"

* The Three Gatherings: a precious little Missionary work, by Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh.

The Mahommedan power, symbolised in the book of the Apocalypse by the "false Prophet," is, with the Papal Beast, to be cast into the lake that burneth with brimstone and fire. And, to allude to its chosen emblem, its crescent is growing more and more pale, and will one day be lost amidst the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness. Signs of decay in the strength of Islamism are exhibited in various parts of the earth, and especially in Turkey, its central power. The late concessions of the Sultan in favour of liberty of conscience, even to Mussulmans if they embrace Christianity, however short they may fall of what some imagine to be the state of the law, or however they may be resisted by the prejudices of his subjects, are a considerable step towards the overthrow of that proud system which, for nearly twelve centuries, have thrown its baleful shadow over so large a portion of the world. The existence in Turkey of unrestricted toleration to the operations of christian zeal, which are now carried on by the American missionaries, for the conversion of the members of the Greek and Armenian churches, must pave the way for the reception of the gospel by the Turks; and it is an undoubted fact, that hundreds of Turks are now purchasing a copy of the Scriptures. British connection with Turkey should by all legitimate means be maintained, if not from political motives, for christian ones. France and Austria would give all their countenance and support to Popery, and Russia to what is as bad, to the superstition of the Greek Church. Protestantism and evangelical religion look to England, under God, for their protection, if not for their existence in Turkey. Those devoted men from the United States are now rekindling the long-extinguished lamps of the seven golden candlesticks in Asia Minor,

and He who in days of yore walked amidst them, is again commencing his stately goings in that region of darkness and desolation.* Let christian hope, then, anticipate the subversion of Mahommedanism.

As Protestants, aware of the dreadful nature of *Popery*, we place the destruction of this awful and terrible system among the objects of our fervent desire and assured expectation. We regard Popery as the master-piece of Satanic craft and malice: his richest trophy, and his proudest triumph. The Pope is more *his* Vicar, than that of Christ, upon earth, and the Vatician his chosen seat of dominion among men. Idolatry was a great invention; Mahommedanism was a mighty stretch of diabolical craft. But Popery transcends both. The other two were devices without the pale of revealed religion; this is within it. They opposed Christianity; this corrupts it. They try to destroy it; this goes far to make it destroy itself. The permission of its existence is the deepest mystery of God's government, next to the introduction of moral evil into the universe. And in the history of the human race, its prevalence over so large a portion of the civilized world, and in the brightest eras of science, learning, and liberty, is one of the most puzzling phenomena of man's intellectual nature. There is no accounting for this prevalence of a system, which shocks the reason by the monstrosity of its doctrines; opposes revelation by its polity and ceremonies; enslaves the conscience by its sacerdotal assumptions; penetrates into the secrets of courts, cabinets, and families, by its all searching confessional; and conspires against the

* Few of the Institutions set up by the spirit of Christian zeal are more interesting or more deserving of support, than the "Turkish Missions Aid Society," which has been formed to support the efforts of the American Missionaries in Turkey.

liberties of mankind by its civil and ecclesiastical tyranny—but upon the principle laid down by the apostle, where he says that "God shall send upon them a strong delusion to believe a lie."

Its present aspect, especially as compared with its condition little more than half a century ago, may beget, in some minds, a doubt as to its ultimate downfall. We have been told of the various risings up of the human mind in revolt against the tyranny of the Papacy, and how they have been successively vanquished or withstood, till its destruction is really become a hopeless object. Be it so, with those who look only to human means, and "who err, not knowing the Scriptures." Let timid hearts and unbelieving minds quail. Its utter downfall is an object of assured christian hope. Not only is its destruction desired, intensely desired, but confidently expected. The book of the Revelation, with whatever obscurity it may speak of the details of times and seasons, publishes the great fact, reveals the grand catastrophe in outline, of the complete and final overthrow of the Antichristian powers. Faith sees the mighty angel with the mill-stone in his hand, while hope stands waiting exultingly, yet patiently, to see him dash it in the flood, and to hear him say, "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."—chap. xviii. 21.

Here, then, is the object of the christian's hope, so far as earth and time are concerned—a redeemed, regenerated, holy, happy world. It is for this he longs, and prays, and labours: and this he confidently expects, because God has promised it: here is the foundation, and justification, and encouragement, of all his efforts for the conversion of the nations to Christ. All our Mis-

sionary Institutions are based upon this hope. This is the spring of all our energies, and the stimulus of our labours. This sustains us under sacrifices and self-denial, discouragement and defeat, delay and disappointment. We have God's command as our warrant; God's promise for our support; God's glory for our end; and God's approbation for our reward. Amidst the restless tides, the perpetual vicissitudes, and the mighty revolutions of human affairs, we go on with our missionary enterprise, assured we shall not labour in vain. It is a work of faith, a labour of love, and therefore we carry it on with the patience of hope.

Thirdly.—But, after all that has been said on these objects, *the* christian hope, that which is so frequently spoken of by the apostles in their writings, has respect to something ulterior, to something above our earth, and beyond the range of time. It penetrates the veil that conceals the unseen world, and lays hold of the invisible realities of eternity. Hope is one great part of the life of true religion; and religion, while it imposes many obligations, and confers many blessings upon earth, points heavenwards. It is a messenger from Paradise come to fetch us there, and which bestows many favours upon us by the way.

1.—In this relation the first object of christian hope is *an entrance into heaven immediately after death.* I am aware that this is neither the sole nor the highest object of christian desire and expectation; and that of course, the felicity of the christian in his disembodied state, is not complete; and also that less is said about his death and entrance into glory, than about the day of Christ's second coming, and the scenes of that glorious advent. Yet *something* is said about it, and therefore something

should be thought about it. Be it so, that our felicity is not complete till the resurrection morning, and that the revelation of Christ is the event to which the sacred writers direct our attention; yet, is it nothing to throw off the burden of the flesh? Nothing to have done with sin and sorrow, care and fear, labour and weariness, disease and death? Nothing to have passed through the dark valley, and to arrive safely in the kingdom of light and glory? If the *post*-millenarians think too little of Christ's second coming as an object of hope, the *pre*-millenarians think too little of death as a time of the believer's emancipation. The *apostle's* mind, at any rate, appears to have been much taken up with the idea of his going to heaven at his death, when he said, "For me to die is gain: I have a desire to depart and be with Christ. We are confident, I say, and willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Our Lord, who attached great importance to this word, directed the attention of his people to it, where he says, "Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee a crown of life." So did his beloved apostle in that precious declaration, "I heard a voice saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."—Rev. xiv. 13.

That the believer continues a conscious existence after death till the resurrection, and enters upon his eternal repose immediately after dissolution, is evident from the language of the apostle just quoted. For would not every one, unbiassed by system, conclude from his language that he hoped to be with Christ immediately on his departure, and that, in fact, he desired his departure purposely to be with him? Had he not expected this, would he not rather have desired to remain? For surely he must have thought it better to live and

labour for Christ, than lie in an unconscious state in the grave. Nay, if this were not the case, would not his decease be a going away from that presence of Christ which he enjoyed upon earth? How could he be absent from the body at all, if the soul were to sleep with it till the resurrection? Nothing can be clearer or more certain than that the apostle *thought* he should at his death go to heaven. And the materialist must, in order to get rid of this fact, be drawn on to deny that he spoke by inspiration, and was labouring under mistake when he penned these words. The existence of separate spirits was intimated in several passages of even the Old Testament. "Then shall the dust return to the earth, and the spirit to God who gave it."—Eccles. xii, 1. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—Psalm lxxiii, 24—26. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."—Isaiah lvii, 2. Our Lord has settled this point not only in his promise to the penitent thief, when he said "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," but when he said to the Jews, "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."—Matt. xxii, 31, 32. We are also told that the martyr Stephen departed saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Other passages might be quoted in proof of this doctrine:—Romans viii, 10, 11; Matt. x, 28; Luke xvi, 22, 28; 2 Cor. v, 1—4; 2 Cor. xii, 2, 3; 1 Thes. v, 10; 1 Peter iii, 18—20; and 2 Peter i, 13, 14.

Neither our reason, nor our experience, nor our observation, can enable us to comprehend, or even conjecture, how our disembodied spirits will exist and act separated from their earthly companion. Whether, indeed, they are pure spirit at all, we can hardly say, some being of opinion that God only is this, and that even angels have some refined material dwelling; and if our souls are pure spirit, we cannot conceive what relation they have to space, and how they communicate with each other. These, and many other questions, such as the place of their residence, their occupations, and the means of inter-communion, which an inquisitive curiosity and a fruitless speculation might ask, and which no divinity or philosophy could answer, may sometimes engage and perplex the thoughts of believers. Theories have been hazardously launched by men of inquisitive and speculative minds upon the place and condition of disembodied spirits. I pass by the monstrous and unscriptural dogma of the Popish Purgatory, and advert only to those notions which have been held by Protestant writers. Bishop Horsley, a man of vast intellect, of profound research, and in many points, of sound theology, yet fanciful both as a critic and a theorist, has a sermon on this subject founded on 1 Pet. iii. 18, 20, "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." On this passage, and one or two more, the Romanists rest their doctrine of Purgatory, with which it has nothing in the world to do; for the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison is here limited to the antediluvians, whereas the souls alleged to be in Purgatory

are those of the human race generally. Moreover, no Romanist I suppose, asserts that Christ *now* goes to preach to the souls in Purgatory. The meaning of the passage is this: the spirits in prison are the souls of the wicked antediluvians, to whom Christ by the ministry of Noah preached, while the ark was being built.

Bishop Horsley considers the spirits in prison to mean the souls of good men in general, who are in some place of safe keeping, not viewed as a penal state, but only as in preservation until the judgment day, when they will be brought to the full participation of heaven, by the resurrection of the body, and the re-union of the soul with it. To these in their separate state, their place of seclusion from the external world, their invisible mansion, their place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope, more than of enjoyment, the spirit of Christ went as soon as he expired on the cross, and preached the glad tidings that he had offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor; a preaching fit to be adddressed to departed souls; and the antediluvians are mentioned to show that there were some even of them that were in this prison, and heard this preaching of Christ.

The object of the bishop, besides giving his view of the state of departed souls, is to explain and justify that most doubtful article of what is called the apostle's creed, which says, "He descended into hell." Will it be believed that even "the venerable Calvin" as the Bishop calls him, hazarded the extravagant assertion that our blessed Lord actually went down into the place of torment, and there sustained the pains of a reprobate soul in punishment? The Bishop shows what is very true, that the word "hell" both in the

Old Testament and in the New, generally means "the unseen world," the world of spirits, including the spirits both of the good and bad. Now, to that part of the invisible state which contains the spirits of the good, our Lord went at his death; and this, he says, is the meaning of the creed "He descended into hell," and at that time preached to the souls in prison. But this is a gratuitous assumption, no where else asserted in Scripture, and not proved by the passage itself on which it is founded. The article in the creed is, as I have said, most unhappily expressed, and leads the unlearned to suppose that Christ actually did descend to the place of lost souls. The simple meaning of the passage already given is, in my view, the true one—the spirits of the wicked antediluvians, then when the apostle wrote, were in prison, to whom in the days of their flesh Christ preached by the ministry of Noah. The Bishop's view of the state of departed souls being in some limbo, as the casuits called it, but not in heaven, derives no support from this passage, nor any other. They are at death immediately in heaven with the Lord.

The better way is not to allow these difficulties to occupy our thoughts at all; to put them aside, and to be satisfied, as Paul appears to have been, with this one idea, that "we shall be ever with the Lord." We need not ask how we shall see him without bodily eyes, or hear him without the organs of sound. Do we not sometimes realise his presence now? Are there not seasons when we can no more doubt that we are in communion with him than we can doubt our own consciousness? Yet we see him not, hear him not, touch him not. It is a purely mental exercise; it is the thinking power alone that is engaged. No bodily organ is employed, no sensation is transmitted

to the soul along any nerve to the brain. It is a mental presence, and a mental bliss. If the soul is not out of the body, which of course it is not, it is *acting* without the bodily senses, and though an unhealthy state of the brain would prevent these exercises of thought, yet this does not prove that the soul is so dependent upon the brain for its operations, that it cannot act without it. Still I admit that though perfectly happy, as far as it can be in a disembodied state, it is not till the resurrection in a *perfect* state of its full and final bliss.

But the supreme object of Christian desire and expectation is that which the apostle has set forth in his epistle to Titus, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ," chap. ii. 13. Before we come to the consideration of my design in bringing forward this passage, I will give a brief exposition of its meaning, so far as it contains a description of the person of Christ. Critics of the highest authority in Greek literature, read it as I have rendered it. Our version makes a distinction between the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, representing them as two persons, and *both* appearing together at the last day. The proposed emendation speaks but of one, and that one Christ. "In this passage," says Dr. Smith, "The coalescence of the two nouns, 'God and Saviour' as the attribution of the one person, 'Jesus Christ' is maintained upon the rules of the Greek idiom. We are *obliged* to construe it so, unless we would violate the determinate use of the language, the constant practice of the sacred writers, and the evidence arising from the uniform testimony of the Christian fathers, to whom the language of the New Testament was vernacular." "The Latin writers," says Dr. Wordsworth,

"as many as convey their sense of the meaning of St. Paul's words, strictly agree, with two poor and doubtful exceptions, with the uniform voice of the Greek interpreters; so that it is the more to be regretted and wondered at, that our English translators should have deprived us of that interpretation which was the only one ever preached in all the ancient churches." In support of this view of the meaning of the passage, it may be alleged that a visible glorious appearing,—for if a glorious *appearance*, it must be a visible one,—is in the current language of the New Testament applied to Christ, and not to the Father, or to the Godhead. No one accustomed to Paul's views and mode of writing, can well doubt that when he used this language he had his eye throughout on the Son of God, and that he expected no other manifestation, even of the great God, than what would be made in and through him. And we may fairly argue that this is the view which most ordinary readers would take, and from which they would conclude that Jesus Christ is truly and properly divine. Nor is it conceivable, that if Jesus Christ were only a mere man, a prophet, a teacher, though the chief of all men, and the greatest of all prophets, that *his* appearance would be thus represented as the supreme and ultimate object of hope to the whole christian church through all the ages of its entire earthly history.

Christ, then, is to appear. He is now the object of belief: He is hereafter to be the object of vision. We are now blessed in believing on him: we shall hereafter be more blessed in seeing him. We are not to imagine that this contradicts his language to Thomas, when he rebuked him for his incredulity in the following language, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have be-

lieved."—John xx. 29. Our Lord is not here comparing believing with seeing, so much as speaking of the different degrees of faith. Happy, or worthy of commendation, are they who have not seen, and yet have, upon credible evidence, believed. There were some of the apostles, or other persons perhaps, who, calling to recollection Christ's own predictions, had, upon the report of others, believed that he was risen from the dead: while Thomas demanded the evidence of his senses. Their faith was much stronger than his, and more entitled to commendation. From hence it seems probable that there might have been somewhat of boasting on the part of Thomas, in his speech on the evening of the resurrection, as if he were a man of too strong an understanding to be easily imposed upon. *He* would not believe that his Master was risen on such trivial evidence as the reports of the women: nothing would satisfy him but ocular demonstration. And while our Lord praised those among the disciples who *had* believed credible report—full well knowing that through all future ages faith must be grounded on the evidence of authentic testimony, and not on that of the senses—he intended to bestow his commendation on all who should from that time believe on him through the inspired report of his witnesses. His language, therefore, is not a comparison between the blessedness of believing and seeing, as if there were more happiness in the former than in the latter; for then the least believer on earth would be more blessed, than the highest apostle in heaven. It is simply an eulogium on all those, who, till the coming of Christ, instead of demanding the evidence of sense, or *more* proof than God has given us of the mission of his Son, should, with meekness, humility, and candour, yield

to that which he *has* given us. It was for *our* encouragement these gracious words were spoken. *We* have not seen him, but we have abundant evidence that he is what he said he was, the Son of God; that he did what it is said he did, died for our offences, and rose again for our justification: and therefore in him whom we have not seen we believe; and believing him, we love him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Oh, no: we cannot put believing above seeing. There *is* joy and peace in believing, just as there is joy in the well-authenticated report that some dear friend or relative, who is pursuing our interests abroad, is alive and well, remembers us, and will soon return to us. Every letter that brings glad tidings of his love, and activity, and purpose of coming back, gives us delight. Believing is in this case a happy state of mind; but what is this to the bliss of seeing him, of beholding him in full prosperity and health, of feeling ourselves in his arms, hearing his voice, and beholding his smiles. Those only can conceive of such raptures who have experienced them. Yes, and so it will be in regard to Christ. We *do* rejoice in faith. To believe what is testified of Christ must be followed with unutterable joy, when that faith is intelligent and strong. We do not wonder the apostle should say, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." But what is this to the *vision* of the Saviour? Old Jacob rejoiced in the report which his sons brought him of Joseph's state and splendour in Egypt; but what was this compared with the almost overpowering rapture of seeing his glory, and feeling his arms clasping him to his bosom? What deep and solemn emotions are produced by the emblems of Christ's broken body in the supper of the Lord. How highly, susceptible

minds which are much under the power of imagination profess to be moved by the masterpieces of painting. Yet these, with the exception of Raphael's picture of the Transfiguration, and a few others setting forth the Last Judgment, generally relate to the scenes of his humiliation. But what artist can ever attempt to rise to the glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ? It were almost blasphemy to attempt it; and though it may seem like an expression of Vandalism to say it, yet I am sometimes inclined to wish that the arts had left the person and work of Christ without their circle of objects, as too sacred or too grand for pictorial representation. The sculptor may pourtray in marble, and the painter on canvass, the humanity of Christ, but they cannot exhibit to the senses the divinity with which it is mysteriously united; they may delineate the outward cross on which that humanity was nailed, but they cannot set forth the inward cross of the soul of the divine sufferer; they may give vivid expression to the passion of grief and the virtue of patience which the countenance exhibits, but not the divine power by which they are sustained; they may excite our sympathies, but by all their genius, can do nothing to strengthen our faith; so that all their images and their pictures, however they may gratify our taste, do very little to increase our knowledge, and invigorate our hope. It is the inspired detail of all this, as recorded by the sacred writers, that alone can answer these ends.

We have only to believe, and hope, and wait, and the divine reality of a revealed Saviour shall be exhibited to the senses of the body of the resurrection. In what magnificence of language, in what splendour of imagery, in what sublimity of thought, have the sacred writers

set forth this stupendous event of the second advent of Christ. I will here collate, and hope the reader will turn to them, a few of the passages in which this is brought before us. Our Lord himself begins the description:—Mat. xxv, 31; the apostles follow,—1 Cor. xv; 1 Thes. iv, 13—18; Col. iii, 4; 2 Thes. i, 7—10, ii,8; 2 Peter iii, 10—13; 1 John iii, 2; Rev. 1, 7, xx, xxi, xxii.

I enter not on the controverted subject of his pre-millennial or post-millennial coming. In whatever sense it is understood, it is the supreme object of the christian hope, as set forth in the New Testament. Alone and apart from all the events that stand connected with it, no *christian* mind can be insensible to its profound and absorbing interest. Were it possible to call from the grave any of the great geniuses that have adorned, blessed, and elevated our common nature, what intense interest would they excite. Would not scholars travel to the ends of the earth to see Homer or Virgil; philosophers to see Plato, Socrates, Bacon, or Aristotle; poets to see Shakspeare, Milton, or Dante; mathematicians to see Euclid, Newton, or Pascal? And, coming from the world to the church, who that could command the means would not cross oceans and continents to see Abraham or Moses, Daniel or Isaiah, Paul or John, Luther or Cranmer? But what are any of these but stars of various magnitudes to the sun? Let any one ponder the expression—THE GLORIOUS APPEARANCE OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOUR! What a sublimity is in the idea. The manifestation of the Creator of the Universe; the manifestation of the Redeemer of a lost world; the manifestation of Him who unites in his one person the uncreated glories of the Godhead, and all the

milder beauties of the perfect man. In that one ineffable manifestation, to have the controversies of all ages about the person of Christ settled beyond the possibility of doubt or dispute; to have it made plain to every mind that he is indeed the great God as well as our Saviour; to see thus before us in full robed majesty, for the confusion of his enemies, and the consolation of his friends, the God-man.

Such is the ultimate hope of the believer, and well might the apostle call it the *blessed* hope; an adjective that expresses, and but feebly expresses, for what can fully express, all the happiness it even *now* imparts to those who indulge it; much less that which will be enjoyed when this desired and expected good will realise it, and the soul shall enjoy the full fruition of it.*

In connexion with the appearance of Christ, will be *the resurrection of the dead.* This also the pre-millenarians and the post-millenarians hold in common, though they differ as to the place of residence and other circumstances of the saints immediately after their resurrection.

* I again remark that I enter not upon the controversy about the visible personal reign on earth of our Lord Jesus Christ, during what is called the millennium. I am not, I confess, a believer in that opinion. And yet, when I consider how many of the most spiritual of God's redeemed family, and of the most devout and earnest students of the Scriptures, have embraced it, and add to this the consolation it gives to their hearts, and the life it imparts to their hopes, I am almost led to doubt whether I am not in error in rejecting this doctrine. But the conflicting hypotheses of those who have given themselves to the study of unfulfilled and symbolical prophecies, the confutation which their most positive expository statements of the meaning of prophetic scripture have received, together with the unfounded hopes which many entertain of an hourly expectation of the appearance spoken of by the apostle, have led me to conclude that the views of the millennarians have not the solid foundation which they seem to imagine. However, with them I most entirely concur in the opinion, that the second advent of Christ is the great object of christian hope, about which far more is said in the New Testament than about the believer's entrance at death into heaven.

It is probable that christians dwell too little on this grand article of their belief, and are taken up too exclusively with the soul and its heavenly bliss. It is conceded that the body is an inferior part of our complex nature. But it *is* a part, and as truly the workmanship of God as the soul. It is the most exquisite material organism in the universe, and an essential part of our manhood. Man is not man without it. Christ died to redeem the body as well as the soul, and as the purchase of his blood, it has, on that account, a great value. It was formed to be a habitation, yea, a temple of the soul, and though smitten into ruin and desolation by death, it is to be rebuilt in a more glorious form at the resurrection. "Christ," says the apostle, "is Lord both of the dead and the living." He has established his throne upon the sepulchre, and stretched his sceptre over the domain of the King of Terrors, who is his vassal prince. He owns, watches, and guards the sleeping dust of his saints. Hence we may with comfort yield up in death not only our spirits, but our poor bodies, into his hands, and say with our poet,—

> God, my Redeemer, lives.
> And often from the skies,
> Looks down and watches all my dust,
> Till he shall bid it rise.

And with equal comfort may we yield up the bodies of our friends to his keeping till the morning of the resurrection. Does not this strip the grave of part of its terrors, and invest the tomb with a kind of sanctity? It is not a prison where the body is incarcerated, but a chamber, where it sleeps under the guardian care of its Redeemer. The apostle has said more about the body as

a separate part of our nature than even about the soul. Who can read that wondrous chapter in the epistle to the Corinthians without astonishment and delight? a chapter which proves its own inspiration. Whence, but from heaven, had this Jew such ideas, so far beyond all that Cicero ever knew, or Plato ever taught? or ever Moses or Isaiah revealed?

With the heathen philosophers the resurrection of the body was thought to be not only impossible, but undesirable even if it were possible. They had a notion that matter as distinguished from spirit was essentially and incurably evil, and that, therefore, a resurrection would be a curse and not a blessing. Hence we find that when Paul preached this doctrine at Athens, the philosophers made him, on this account, the object of their ridicule. From his address to the Corinthian Church we learn that some of its members had drank into this error, and considered that the resurrection signified not a material quickening of the dead body, but a spiritual quickening of a dead soul. Others of the first Christians held the same notion, as is evident from what he says of Hymenæus and Philetus. This opinion is still professed, I believe, by the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg. To confute this notion, or at any rate the general opinion that there is no resurrection of the dead, is the design of the elaborate and conclusive argumentation in the chapter to which I have just alluded: an argument which the apostle founded on the resurrection of Christ —HE lived, died, and rose again, not as a private, but public person, the representative of his people; so that if he rose, they will also rise. Their resurrection is involved in his. Hence he commences the chapter with, not only an assertion of Christ's resurrection, but a summary of the evidence of it.

How is it then that Christians do not more frequently dwell on this grand and delightful truth? One reason perhaps is its mysterious nature, and most mysterious it is: how a body, which at death, is dissolved into all its simple elements, and which elements may be taken up to form grass, flowers, trees, fruits, the bodies of animals, yea, of other men, can be raised again, so as to be in any sense the same body, transcends all human conception; and yet it must be in some sense the same body, or its re-existence would be a creation, and not a resurrection. Yet it cannot be the same body, as regards its numerical particles, for the body is ever in a state of change, and the body we now possess is not, as to the numerical particles of which it is composed, the same as it was seven years ago; yet, as to identity, it is still the *same* body. What then will constitute its identity? No philosophy, no divinity can penetrate this mystery.

The apostle, in answer to the cavil, "With what body do they come?" answers analogically by a reference to the grain sown, which dies before it rises into the blade and the ear. But this was not so much intended to explain the mystery, as to answer an objection. The cavil was, "How can a dead body become a living one?" The thing seems an impossibility; "Look, says he, "at the grain of corn cast into the earth, is there not death before life there?" If you had never known or heard of the process of germination and vegetation, and had never seen the growth of a plant, would you not, when you saw the grain cast into the earth, when you saw it decay and turn to dust, deem it altogether improbable that it would in any form ever rise out of the ground? Yet, says the apostle, this does take place, and this should remove all objections against the idea of the resurrection of a dead body.

There is an analogy, an imperfect one, it is admitted, and the main objection in one case would also be equally against the acknowledged and indisputable fact in the other. The apostle does not draw a parallel between the two cases, for they are not parallel. The whole of the grain does not die, there is a germ, which if the grain were deposited at a certain depth below the surface, and protected from the quickening influences of the soil and the elements, would live for thousands of years; but we know of no such living, indestructible germ in the human body which is preserved from the power of the last enemy. And then this resurrection of the grain is by slow degrees of vegetation, whereas the body is raised at once perfect and glorious. The argument is altogether of a popular character, and must not be pressed too far. The objection was, that the body died and returned to dust and could not rise again: says Paul, in reply, You may make the same objection to the grain that is sown, that dies also. The main body of the kernel dies. In itself there is no prospect that it will spring up. The analogy may be carried a little farther than this, and be intended also to set forth, as far as such an illustration can go, the greatness and beauty of the change that will take place in the body by the resurrection. Look at the blade of wheat; see it in all the elegance of its form; the cylinder and joints of its stem; the freshness of its verdure; the gracefulness of its blade; the richness of the ear and crown of its berries, and compare all this with the grain from which it sprang, when in a state of decay in the earth, and then see a faint emblem of the change to be made in our poor frail bodies by the resurrection.*

Now consider what the apostle has said on this sub-

* See Barnes.

ject:—"*It is sown in corruption,*" even while alive it is subject to painful, loathsome, and wasting disease; and when dead it falls under the process of putrefaction, and sinks into a state of dissolution and dust—but it is raised unsusceptible of pain, disease, decay, and disorganization. "*It is sown in dishonour,*"—corruption itself is dishonour; it requires covering and concealment before it descends to the grave, to hide its deformities and defilements, and when dead, it is hurried off to the grave, as too offensive for the fondest eye to look upon; but it shall be "raised in *glory,*" for the apostle tells us, "our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body (the body of our humiliation,) by the mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."—Phil. iii, 21. Can the idea of glory itself be carried higher than to be like Christ? See him transfigured on Mount Tabor, when his face shone as the sun, and his raiment glittered with a purity whiter than the snow, and he was one blaze of splendour. We are to be raised like that. "*It is sown in weakness.*" In life it is feeble, soon weary, needing sleep, food, medicine, to keep it in working condition at all, often unfit for its occupation, and pressed down first by infirmity and then by age, and at last worn out, unable to resist the approach of death, and dropping into the grave,—but it is "raised in *power*;" it shall be lifted above the frailties of humanity, no longer be a clog, but wings, to the soul, needing no more sleep, or food, or renovating treatment, but nerved with the vigour of immortal youth, and capable of the service of God without weariness or languor. "*It is sown a natural*" or "*animal body.*" It now possesses a lower physical life like the brute animals, has animal

instincts, passions, propensities, and appetites, and thus symbolises with the inferior creatures; it is supported in the same manner, and is, like them, subject to the law of mortality, — but it is "raised a *spiritual body*," from which the lower animal life will be extruded, and a new kind of physical existence introduced. It will still be a material body, but not an animal one. Its organic structure will be entirely changed. Some of its senses will probably be extinguished, some of its purest ones retained, such as sight and hearing, though how this can be without its present material organisation is now a mystery; other senses, of which we can now have no more conception than the blind has of colours, or the deaf of sounds, will be added. In short, "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." Oh, the glorious sublimity, the mysterious magnificence, the rapturous incomprehensibility of these two words, as applied to the body,—INCORRUPTIBILITY and IMMORTALITY! We can enter but a little way into the poet's words,—

> My flesh shall slumber in the ground,
> Till the last trumpet's dreadful sound;
> Then burst the chains with sweet surprise,
> And in my Saviour's image rise.

It is to this the apostle's lofty language applies, where he says, "For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."—2 Cor. v, 1-4. What an expression, "*mortality swallowed up of life!*" Our little, feeble, short-lived self, body and soul, absorbed in an ocean of life eternal.

Nor ought we to consider *our own* resurrection apart from the resurrection of the whole redeemed family, as the exclusive object of hope. At the coming of Christ the reign of the King of Terrors will come to an end; the iron sceptre which he has swayed for so many centuries shall drop from his hand; he shall be deposed from his throne; and he himself, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. Death itself shall die. Then shall come to pass the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." The countless hosts of believers of every age, shall come forth from their graves, when the living saints, in a moment, at the last trump, in the twinkling of an eye, shall be changed, and the unimagined, unimaginable host ascend to meet the Lord in the air.

Such is the object of the Christian's hope, as regards the resurrection of the body. Faith may and does believe it. Hope may and does desire and expect it; but imagination's utmost thought, its most adventurous and brilliant conception, dies away, and confesses the feebleness of its effort. The wing of fancy, after a few fluttering attempts to rise, droops, and piety hears and obeys the voice which says, "Wait, and you shall see!"

In that day of consummation, that "bridal of the soul," the redeemed man will stand complete, glorified in body and soul, a fit inhabitant of a world of glory. How joyfully, exultingly, and triumphantly, will the happy spirit re-enter its material habitation, then transformed from a poor, dilapidated, mud-wall cottage, into a glorious mansion, a sacred temple, a royal residence, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. O, what awaits this humanity of ours! How death and the grave lose their terrors in this glorious prospect. How wonderful that the world should not lose its power over us, by

the superior attractions of this scene of transcendent and incomparable glory.

But more is yet to be told; and all may be summed up in that word of mysterious meaning, of unfathomable bliss, and of inconceivable glory—HEAVEN. This is the expression and summation of all the believer hopes for beyond the grave. This is the word which sheds such a lustre on the page of the New Testament, and distinguishes it so illustriously from the Old. But where, and what is it? Over one part of this question, the veil of silence is dropped by the hand of God, as it is over many other subjects; for "it is the glory of God to conceal a matter." "Many would have felt it a satisfaction had the Saviour, when he spoke of his Father's house with its many mansions, told us the precise region of the family residence, so that looking out on the starry firmament we might have been able to fix on the sun, the moon, or some planet, and say, "Yonder it is; yonder is the world to which the spirits of my fathers have already gone, and to which I myself, ere long, am going." How delightful it would have been, we are ready to think, to be able every day, or every night, to look up and see the light of our Father's dwelling, just as a child in his journeying home from school can see his paternal home stand out conspicuously in the landscape. But this cannot be. It would not harmonise with the gospel scheme, which requires that from beginning to end we should walk by faith, and not by sight; we are to see nothing while on earth, but believe every thing; just as when we reach heaven, we shall see every thing, and merely believe nothing. No matter *where* heaven is, since we know *what* it is. Locality is a small item in its bliss. We feel that now. The faithful wife would sooner dwell with

her loving husband in a cottage, than be separated from him in a palace. The affectionate child pines in a mansion for the home of his parents, though that is a scene of comparative poverty. Locality has infinitely less to do with happiness on earth, than the domestic and social relationships, ties, and affections. Still, we doubt not, that even heaven's *place* will be a part of heaven's *glories.* God "is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." There is, perhaps, something more than figure in the ravishing description of the New Jerusalem, in the two last chapters of the Revelation. Not that for a moment we contend for a literality in that blaze of material splendour. But it may still be considered as intimating, in some degree, the visible glory of the residence of the redeemed family.

But *what* is heaven? What is it, in turning the eye of hope to the future world, we are to desire and to expect? Here again, we say, God is silent about many things. "It does not yet appear what we shall be." Many subjects cannot be revealed. We might as well attempt to explain to an infant prince his future state and glory as the puissant monarch of a mighty empire, as to explain to a child of God on earth *all* his future honour and bliss in heaven. There are felicities and occupations for which we have no terms, and no ideas. But how much *is* told us. Our Lord has summed it all up in that most sublime and comprehensive of all phrases, "ETERNAL LIFE"—everlasting existence, with all that can render it an eternal blessing. It is life, intellectual—physical—spiritual—social—in absolute perfection, and all this for ever. Such life, that compared with it, all we have known of life here deserves the name of death, rather than life; life so full, so rich, so abundant, as

to exclude all pain, all care, all fear, all gnawing hunger, and parching thirst, all wearisome labour; in short, the body and soul to be so free from all the least interruption of enjoyment, as that through eternity there shall never be a moment when there shall not be a fulness of joy; when the happy immortal shall not be able to say, "THIS IS LIFE." Even the very negatives ascribed to the heavenly state, seem to make a paradise of themselves. Knowing to our regret what, as regards our sins, our sorrows, and our cares, we now *are*, it is a part of our bliss to know what hereafter we shall *not* be.

But let us now dwell upon the *positive* of heaven, and consider what we *shall* be. There is, perhaps, no term more frequently employed to set forth our future state than the word "*glory*." None could have been more appropriately selected. It signifies, when used to describe material objects, brightness, splendour, dazzling effulgence. Hence we apply it to the sun, or any unusually bright light in the heavens. It means the perfection of material manifestation—that which reveals all things, beautifies all things, perfects all things. In figurative language, it means honour, renown, that which renders any person or thing illustrious. So that when we find the deficiency of ordinary words to set forth the greatness, the grandeur, and transcendental nature of any person, action, or thing, we call in the aid of this word, and exclaim, "It is GLORIOUS." What then must heaven be, which is a state of unparalleled, perfect, infinite "GLORY." This, like the term "LIFE," conveys a more impressive idea of our future state than lengthened and laboured description. The apostle sums up heaven in one place thus: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This probably means not only the glory which God has prepared

for us in all its details; but the direct perception and enjoyment which in heaven we shall have of God himself. The service, knowledge, and enjoyment of God, must form the loftiest employment of any creature's powers, however exalted he may be, and the richest bliss his heart can know. "To know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is eternal life," not only the means of obtaining it, but its essential felicity. In this world how little we know, how much less we enjoy, of God. To every unconverted man, creation, instead of illustrating the Deity, has thrown a cloud of obscurity over him; and even to the believer, he is seen in dimness and disguise; so that almost all he can do is to long after him in the world. But in heaven God will show himself personally to man; the thick veil shall be lifted up; the barrier of interception, now so opaque and impenetrable, will be removed. "Then shall the great Father of the universe stand revealed to the eye of his creatures rejoicing before him, when all that design and beauty by which this universe is enriched, shall beam in a direct flood of radiance from the original mind that evolved it into being; when the sight of infinite majesty shall be so tempered by the sight of infinite mercy, that the awe which else would overpower, will be sweetened by love, into a most calm, and solemn, and confiding reverence; and the whole family of heaven shall find it to be enough happiness for ever, that the glories of Divinity are visibly expanded to their view, and they are admitted into the high delights of ecstatic and ineffable communion with the living God."

But it may be asked, how will God reveal himself to the glorified inhabitants of heaven? "They shall see his face." Not that the *essence* of God can be seen any more in heaven than it is on earth. Jesus Christ will

there be the image of the invisible God. We shall see *him*, and thus will be verified to us the words of the Saviour to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We find this representation to have been adopted both by Christ and his apostles. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."—John xvii, 24. Our Lord speaks of this vision as constituting the very substance of our heavenly felicity. This glory, however, does not refer exclusively to his personal appearance, though this is included; but also to the completion of his mediatorial work, to the state and majesty in which he dwells, to the homage which is paid him, to the infinite stores of wisdom, grace, and power which he possesses; to all he is, has done, and can do, to bless the universe. He prayed that his disciples might be brought to see the wonderful contrast presented by his heavenly, to his earthly, condition. They had seen him as the Man of Sorrows, and he desires they should behold him as the Lord of glory. He knew the love his true disciples bear to him, and that they could have no higher happiness than to be with him, and see his exaltation and honours, just as Joseph desired his brethren to tell his father of all his glory in Egypt, from a knowledge of the pleasure it would convey to his paternal heart. In the sublime visions of the Apocalypse, where heaven is opened to our view, it is Christ who is represented as the glory of the place, lighting up all countenances with joy, filling all hearts with gladness, and making all tongues vocal with praise. He is the sun of that blessed world, the orb of that nightless, cloudless, and eternal day. This was the heaven Paul longed for when he desired to depart, even

to be with Christ. That one idea of being with Christ filled his soul, and he thought it enough. To be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, was the prevailing wish of his truly christian heart. With this he cheered the spirits of the Thessalonians weeping over the graves of departed relatives:—"So shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."—1 Thes. iv, 18. How entirely this falls in with all our present ideas, both natural and spiritual. When our affection is very strongly fixed upon an individual, and our feelings are wrought up to a high pitch of intensity, it is the presence and converse of that individual which constitutes our chief joy. Any where, and any how, with them is our earthly Paradise. We want no other company. To be alone with them is our desire. Does not the christian understand and feel all this in reference to Christ? Is he not now the object of his supreme regard? Are there not moments when he has such views of Christ's glory, such conceptions of his amazing mercy, such a sense of his love, such feelings of gratitude and affection, that he is ready to say, "If I feel all this now, when I only believe, what must be the felicity of beholding his full-orbed glory, of gazing upon his face, and hearing his loving voice. *I* can conceive of no higher heaven, no more perfect paradise, than to be in the presence of Him who died for me upon the cross?" There is something wonderfully impressive, delightful, and unique in thus resolving the bliss of heaven into a particular state of mind, and that state as consisting of an adoring and grateful love, for a being to whom we are indebted for redemption *from* an infinitude and eternity of torment, and *to* an infinitude and eternity of bliss; and who adds to all these claims upon our gratitude

additional ones upon our homage and admiration, for his own infinite and eternal glories.

Among the felicities of heaven, and a rich one it is, such as at times makes the christian's heart to leap for joy, is *the spiritual perfection of our nature.* "We shall be like him," says the apostle, "for we shall see him as he is." Nothing that defileth or worketh abomination shall have any entrance into that state. Only perfect holiness can produce perfect happiness, and that we shall have in heaven. The last stain will be effaced from our nature; the final stroke of absolute perfection will be given to our soul; the last filling in to the image of God in our spirit will be accomplished. We shall know the meaning, because we shall possess the reality, of that rapturous expression, "*The spirits of just men made perfect.*" Cowper has strikingly expressed all this in one of his hymns:—

But though the poison lurks within,
  Hope bids me still with patience wait,
Till death shall set me free from sin,
  Free from the only thing I hate.

Had I a throne above the rest,
  Where angels and archangels dwell,
One sin unslain within my breast,
  Would make that heaven as dark as hell.

The pris'ner sent to breath fresh air,
  And blessed with liberty again,
Would mourn were he condemned to wear
  One link of all his former chain.

But oh! no foe invades the bliss,
  When glory crowns the christian's head,
One view of Jesus as he is,
  Will strike all sin for ever dead.

Nor must we omit as part of the object of christian hope, the *society* of heaven. Man is a social being.

Solitude was not good for him even in Paradise, nor would it be good for him in heaven. Companionship seems wanting to every being in the universe, God alone excepted. How large a portion of our happiness now arises from friendship, fellowship, and converse. It will be so above. What attractions does heaven present on this ground. There will be the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs. There, all the holy men and women whose names shine with such splendour on the page of inspiration, both of the Old and New Testament, Abraham and Moses, David and Samuel, Paul and Peter, James and John; there, all that have adorned the pages of uninspired ecclesiastical history, the pious kings; the godly bishops; the zealous reformers, Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Cranmer, Knox and Zwingle; there, all the faithful ministers, Wesley and Whitfield, Scott, Chalmers, Hall, and Jay; there, the devoted missionaries, Schwartz and Brainerd, Morrison and Carey, Martyn and Vanderkemp; there, the palm-bearing multitude which no man can number, gathered out of every kindred, and tribe, and people, "which have washed their robes and made them white and clean in the blood of the Lamb." All, all, sinlessly perfect, all with glorified bodies, exalted intellects, and stainless hearts. All freed from those infirmities which sometimes disturbed the communion of saints upon earth, and by hard speeches and bitter controversies grieved each other's minds, now harmonised by perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, and perfect love. Oh, to be introduced to such society, to be one of them, to dwell with them, to maintain eternal converse with them! To be gathered together with them, and all to Christ!! This is heaven, and what a heaven!

But are there no *occupations* in heaven? Is it a state of glorified indolence, of paradisaic voluptuous ease, where the immortal spirit, the inquisitive soul, yearning after knowledge and made for activity, will spend eternal ages lounging through the streets of the New Jerusalem, or dosing in dreamy repose on the banks of the river of life, and in the shadow of the tree of life? Nothing of the kind. Heaven is a busy world, a place of universal activity, occupations worthy of glorified immortals will be found there. Now we know only in part; there shall we know every thing as we are known; knowledge is not only power, but bliss. It is that to the mind which water is to the thirsty palate; what it craves after when it has it not, and luxuriates in when it has. The whole universe will be thrown open to our contemplation. Space, and the material universe, will be one vast library, and its countless millions of stars, so many volumes to read and study, in order to know the glories of creation. Providence, with all its vast machinery and complicated schemes, combining in its plan, the history of the mightiest nations, and meanest individuals, and all manifesting the wisdom, power, and love of God, will form another department of study, where happy spirits will have mysteries solved, which baffled the loftiest intellects on earth; but the object of deepest interest, of profoundest research, and most delighted inquiry will be the sublimest all God's works, the scheme of Redemption. The attractions of the cross will be felt in heaven. It will be seen to be the focal point of God's manifested glory. The connections, the bearings, the full and complete results of Christ's mediation, now so imperfectly known, will furnish a subject of study, never to be exhausted, and a source of happiness which will ever satiate,

but never surfeit. In heaven it is said, with beautiful simplicity, "His servants shall serve him," in what way, we cannot now say; but it will be an employment worthy of the place, the servant, and the Master.

And all this *for ever*. Eternity is the crown of heavenly glory. The greater the bliss of heaven is, the more necessary to its full enjoyment does it seem that it should be eternal. To look from such felicity through the vista of millions of ages, and see at that distance a termination, would throw a damp on all our joys, a shadow on our brightest scenes. But amidst this rapturous and sublime festivity, to be able to say, "*All this for ever*;" this *is* heaven. A slight enjoyment, if eternal, rises into a vast magnitude; but the addition of eternity to infinitude, surpasses all conception, except that of the omniscient intellect. And this is our portion, if we are Christians, "An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It seems too vast for our possession. Its magnitude creates a kind of incredulity. To live as long as God lives; we are ready to say, "Can it be?" Yet it is all that: there is an eternity before us in which to grow in knowledge and bliss, and make approaches to attainments all-but infinite—eternity to tower from height to height in glory—eternity to enjoy God and his works. How is it we think so little about it? How is it that such amazing joys do not constant bliss create? How is it we do not enter more deeply and more constantly into the apostle's expression, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God"? Because our faith is so weak—our hope so languid—our time so occupied, and our attention so diverted from it, that we allow ourselves no leisure to meditate upon it.

CHAPTER V.

SALVATION BY HOPE.

SALVATION! What a word! And what a blessing! One word, but containing millions of ideas. It is the Bible, condensed into a single term. God's eternal councils; Christ's redeeming work; the Spirit's sanctifying power; all the riches of divine grace, and all the blessings of eternal glory, are in substance comprehended in those few syllables. That one word is a boundless, fathomless ocean of blessedness: like the love that originated the wondrous fruit of redeeming mercy, it passeth knowledge. All that preachers have said; all that authors have ever written; all that christians have ever felt, imagined, hoped for, in regard to salvation, leave its full meaning yet to be explained. It can be comprehended only in heaven; developed only in eternity.

This is in one sense a *present* blessing. We are now regenerated, justified, sanctified. We are *now* the children of God, and *have* "passed from death unto life." We that believe "*have* eternal life." The first fruits, the foretaste, the pledge of eternal salvation, are already granted to us, but the consummation, the full possession is to come. Hence says the apostle, "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doeth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it,"

Rom. viii. 24. It is obvious, that it is here intended that a *full* salvation cannot be possessed in this world, but must be hoped for in the next. It is a future object, and must be waited for in holy desire, and patient expectation. Yet in this seems also included, by necessity, the other idea, that hope keeps the believer steadfast in the pursuit of it, and persevering in the means necessary to its future possession. So that we are saved by hope. And indeed this is true, in even a still wider sense. Hope has much to do from beginning to end in *obtaining* our salvation. God's redeeming love, purpose, and plan, have made our world the region of hope. Earth is hope's territory, its *only* territory. It exists not in heaven, for there all is possession; nor in hell, for there all is despair. But here every man by the work of Christ is placed, so to speak, in a salvable state. By his very birth he is introduced into a world where he may hope for salvation through the atonement of Christ. Mercy bids him welcome to earth, smiles upon his cradle, and to his very childhood holds out her hand to conduct him to salvation. Hence he is to be reminded of this. Preachers are to tell him that he is within the reach of mercy, and urge him to use the means of salvation. We are commissioned to inform him that he is in a world between heaven and hell, and that he may escape from the one, and obtain the other; so that even before he has saving faith or true Christian hope, we may awaken in his soul the desire and expectation of being saved. We are to tell him there is a salvation provided for him. This is necessary before he can be induced to take a step, or put forth an effort to possess himself of it. He must be addressed as a lost sinner, yet not beyond the reach of mercy; as a being going on to eternal existence beyond the grave, and who

may be made a partaker of immortal bliss. It is this general desire and vague expectation, which may be called a rational hope, or rather, the hope of a rational creature, as distinguished from the enlightened hope of the believer, that must be excited in the mind of man, and which can alone induce him to give earnest heed to the salvation of his soul. This vague and general hope cannot save him, but it may lead on to that which can. It has nothing holy in it, but it may end in that which has. It is not the product of saving faith, but it puts its possessor upon obtaining it.

If we can get men, even upon their natural and instinctive regard to their own happiness, to hope for felicity beyond the grave, and prompt them to seek after it, however ignorant they may be at the time of the way of salvation, we have gained something. True, this is only an appeal to their self-love, but to what other principle can we appeal in the first instance? It seems to me the excellence of the gospel that it appeals first of all to man's natural instincts, for he has no spiritual ones before conversion. Is it not thus that God acts in all his invitations to unconverted sinners, and in all his promises and threatenings? Yea, in the second table of the law we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. This self-love cannot be wrong, for surely our Lord could not intend to found a duty upon a sin. Self-love is not to be confounded with selfishness. The latter means an exclusive regard to our own happiness; self-love means only a duly regulated one. Selfishness is to be destroyed, self-love only to be directed and controlled. The preacher of the gospel goes through the world as the herald of salvation, proclaiming glad tidings to all men, with the view of awakening, in the first instance, such a

general and instinctive hope of salvation, as shall put them upon the means of obtaining it, and lead them to Christ, as its proper and only foundation. Thus the sinner is saved by hope, but only so far as this incipient and vague expectation puts him upon seeking it in earnest, and in God's way of bestowing it.

But neither conversion nor justification, when obtained, is the whole of salvation, nor are both together. Faith brings the soul back to the enjoyment of God's favour, but heaven, the final consummation of the work of grace, is also to be obtained; this completion of our salvation is yet to be reached. Hence the beautiful language of the apostle, when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."—1 Peter i, 3. We have a pilgrimage to pass through before we reach that city of habitation; a wilderness to traverse, all kinds of privations to endure, difficulties to encounter, dangers to escape, and enemies to vanquish, before we set foot on the celestial Canaan. And how shall we reach that better, that heavenly country? I answer, "We are saved by hope." True it is we walk by faith, and are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; but then faith is never complete without hope. Faith worketh by hope, as well as by love. And it will now be my business to show, not only that perseverance to the end is necessary, but, how christian hope enables us to attain it. It calls out and sustains every grace and virtue, the exercise of which is necessary for the continuance of our christian course.

1. *Fixed, determined resolution* is essential to our

reaching the end of our faith—"the salvation of our souls." The apostle dwells on this with great frequency and fervour. 1 Cor. xv. 58. The christian's mind must be made up to this. His language must be in some such formula as the following:—"My purpose is fixed, and nothing on earth shall shake it, to reach heaven at last. My plan is laid, and nothing shall alter it. I see that all the richest possessions on earth, everything that can gratify taste, ambition, cupidity, or appetite, is but the small dust of the balance to me. I am for heaven. God helping me, no sacrifice, no self-denial, no hardship, no suffering, shall hold me back. I am resolutely surrendered, irrevocably committed, indissolubly bound to that object. Ridicule shall not turn me aside; persecution shall not terrify me; wealth shall not seduce me; pleasure shall not allure me. I am for heaven, and none of these things attract or move me. I will forego every thing, and sacrifice every thing, that stands in the way of everlasting glory." Ah! what is it that is wanted in the great bulk of christian professors, but this absolute determination to reach heaven at last? How few of them have deliberately, determinedly brought their minds to this intelligent, ever-operative purpose. How comparatively rare is the spectacle of a man, who seems to have heaven in his eye, his heart, his hope, as the great object of desire, pursuit, and expectation. Look at the conduct of professing christians, and see how different it is from this. They have resolutions, but these are of the earth, earthly. They have their fixed purposes, but how far below the skies do they reach; and their plans, but they appertain to the present world. Let no man deceive himself here, none will reach heaven but as the result of fixed, deliberate, practical, and persevering determi-

nation. And no man will come to this state of mind, but by hope. It is this alone,—the view of heaven's glories, the expectation of eternal life, and some tolerably intimate acquaintance with it,—that will lead to such an heroic resolution as I am now supposing. It must, indeed, be a hope of mighty power and impulse that will induce a man to surrender a whole life, and all that it contains, for the possession of its object.

2. *Patience* is another thing required to our perseverance unto the end. Indeed, the etymological meaning of the Greek word, rendered "patience," signifies "perseverance;" it is such a fortitude in the endurance of suffering as leads to "continuance in well doing." It has both a passive and an active meaning. Patience is the suffering virtue,—a desire, a purpose, and an ability to endure with uncomplaining, unresisting meekness. This is a grace much more frequently called for in some states of the church than in others. Times of persecution, when the endurance of all kinds of painful inflictions is demanded, and bonds imprisonment and death are likely to wear out the fortitude and steadfastness of the saints—then in such circumstances as these, what can sustain the soul but patience, and what can sustain patience but hope? Only those who endure to the end, even amidst such sufferings as these, can be saved; and only those who are patient, can endure; and only those who are hopeful, can be patient. The apostle states this very appropriately, where he says, "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we have trusted (or hoped, as it is in the original) in the living God."—1 Tim. iv. 10.

3. *Continued sanctification* is necessary to our entrance into heaven. Neither justification, nor regeneration, nor

both together, without sanctification, will take us to glory everlasting. It is true that the connexion of this latter with the two former is secured by God's sovereign purpose of mercy towards his people; yet this renders it not at all the less necessary to deal with it as matter of exhortation. The christian should therefore be reminded that it is only those who persevere to the end in a way of faith and holiness who shall be saved. It is at the peril of his soul carelessly and presumptuously to exclaim, when in a state of declension or backsliding, "Once in a state of grace, always in it." To abuse the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to the indulgence of a frame of mind incompatible with the christian profession, is a sure sign of an unconverted state. He who can deliberately wander from the way of holy living, under the idea, and with the expectation, that he shall be brought back again in God's time, may be very sure he never was in the way. We have need to be continually exhorted, and need constantly to attend to the exhortation, to "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation." The requirements of God's law are so large, the demands of Christ upon his followers so extensive, their own profession is so comprehensive and so strict, and the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, are so constant and so urgent in one way or other, or from one quarter and another, that really it is a difficult matter to maintain that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The christian life, which is a life of inward and outward holiness, is a continued conflict, mortification, crucifixion. We are sternly called upon to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand, and maintain, even in the most tranquil times, and without any self-invented, self-imposed penances, a rigorous habit of self-denial.

Many things which would gratify the flesh, the privation of which not only deprives us of what others enjoy, but exposes us to wonder, reproach, or ridicule, must be abstained from if we would be holy. And how shall we be able to adhere, in such circumstances, to the way of godliness? The fear of destruction may do something towards this. Our Lord bids his disciples "fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell:" and in many other places the appeal is to our fear, in the way of warning. It is a perversion of the gospel system of love and mercy to say it excludes *all fear*. We know that the apostle has said, "Perfect love casteth out fear, for fear has torment." This latter expression explains and limits the former, and indicates that the only fear which love casts out, *is* that which hath torment, and that even this is not cast out but by *perfect* love. Still, I admit it is the hope of heaven and the love of God which are chiefly dwelt upon in the scriptures of the New Testament, as the means and motives of sanctification. This will be explained at large when we come to the chapter on hope as a purifier.

4. Akin to this, and necessary for it, is *watchfulness*. If we would not be led into temptation, we must watch against it. There is scarcely any duty more frequently or more urgently enjoined upon us than this holy vigilance, and, therefore, none is more necessary. How impressively did our Lord enjoin this upon his disciples, —Mat. xxiv, xxv, xxvi. As we are ever surrounded by temptation, this follows, of course. What soldier who is in an enemy's country, where every tree, every hedge, every wall may conceal a foe, who is at that moment taking aim, and about to send the fatal bullet to his heart, would not keep constant watch on every object?

This is precisely our situation and our duty. In one hour, and when not thinking of danger, much less apprehending it to be near, we may be brought into a trial of our faith and steadfastness which may seem to imperil our whole salvation. An unwatchful security may be our ruin. This was the cause of all the scandals we read of in Scripture. Eve was unwatchful when she listened to the tempter's wiles, and Adam when he hearkened to the persuasions of his wife, and lost Paradise for themselves and their posterity. Noah was unwatchful when he drank the fruit of the vine and became intoxicated. Abraham was unwatchful when he lied to defend the chastity of his wife. David was unwatchful when he was walking on the house top, saw Bathsheba, and fell into the crimes of adultery and murder. Peter was unwatchful when he denied his Master with oaths and curses. Yes, and the failings of God's people in every age since are to be traced to the same negligence. Satan knows when we are off our watch tower, or asleep upon it, and takes instant advantage of our want of vigilance. *He* never slumbers if we do; and what is so likely to keep our eyes open, our vigilance eager, as hope? This is the ever wakeful sentinel of the soul. This, when vigorous and lively, is all eye, all ear, all hand, all foot. It sees the least object, hears the least noise, feels the least touch, snatches up its weapons, and hastens to the point of danger or advantage. It is ever waiting, ever watchful, ever prepared for defence or assault. Intent thus upon the glorious object of our christian desire and expectation, we shall walk circumspectly, looking all around to see if any foe be near.

5. Can any rational creature, who reads the Word of God, expect to reach heaven without *unwearied diligence?*

In how many passages of the New Testament is this enjoined upon us? One only need here be cited,—"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue," et cet. This is also repeated a few verses after,—"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—2 Peter, i, 5-9. Let the reader be attentive to the words of this exhortation. It not only enjoins diligence, but *all* diligence; and for what a purpose! to practise a whole chain of virtues, each one of which requires the strength of Omnipotence to enable us to exercise it, and thus to make our calling and election sure; sure to our entire conviction, so that we may walk onward in our christian career, with the blissful consciousness that we are elected and called to salvation. If diligence be necessary for anything, it is to obtain salvation; if it can be justified in reference to anything, it is for salvation; if it be successful in anything, it is in salvation; and if in anything it be rewarded, it is in salvation. The difficulties of the divine life are so great, so numerous, and so constant, that of all the vain hopes of success in any undertaking, the vainest is that indulged by the man who expects to get to heaven without diligence. A tradesman who is surrounded with eager, skilful, and industrious competitors, but who lies in bed till mid-day, may much more rationally expect to succeed, than he who anticipates the possession of heaven without constant, indomitable, and unwearied diligence. Let any one consider what are the promises to be believed, the duties to be performed, the sacrifices to be made, the difficulties to be surmounted, the mortification to be exercised, the enemies to be encountered, the battles to be fought, the victories to be achieved, before salvation can be obtained, and then say if all this can be done without

diligence. Everything incites to this. The conduct of God himself sets the example. The Pagan philosophers used to argue that the world must be eternal, or otherwise, they said, the Deity would have been idle; they considered not the incomprehensible delight, nor the infinite business of rest, and rest of business, which he had in himself. Inactivity is not incident to God; and if God be diligent, should not man? and if the chief diligence of God be about man's salvation, how much more should man be about it also? It has been quaintly said, by an old author, "that God built his temple on a threshing floor, to teach men industry and diligence;" alluding to the ground on Mount Moriah, which David purchased of Araunah, for the erection of an altar, after the pestilence was stayed. We cannot obtain anything earthly that is good without labour, and can we expect to gain heaven without it? Alas, alas, how are even professors slackened in their pursuit of heavenly things by such as are earthly. Oh, that we could see christians working out their salvation with the same diligence that they are working at their worldly calling. We are told by the fable that when Jupiter had invited all living creatures to a banquet, the tortoise came in at the end of the feast; and upon being reproved for his dilatoriness, excused himself on the ground of the house which he carried upon his back, whereupon Jove adjudged him for ever to keep in his shell. Let us take care that when God calls us to the celestial banquet, we do not allow a house, or some personal, domestic, earthly concern, to hinder us, lest all our happiness be confined to it. In the case of the poor tortoise, his impediment was put upon him by nature; ours is self imposed. More than once we are exhorted by the apostle not to be slothful.

Sloth is the opposite of diligence, an inactive, drowsy, slumbering state of soul. Such a disposition is hateful in everything, but most hateful and most surprising in regard to salvation. There is an animal in the zoological world *called* the sloth, whose habits render him the concrete of all that is lazy, inert, and torpid. He will occupy three days in climbing a tree, and fall asleep in the act. He scarcely ever moves but when compelled by hunger, and then rarely traverses more than fifty paces in a day. He utters a piteous cry, as if movement were a distress; and is held in such detestation, that even beasts of prey retire from him in disgust. With such an illustration of the nature of slothfulness, how forcibly comes to us the warning of the apostle against it,—"*Be not slothful.*" Instead of this, as his emblem, the professing christian should select the eagle, which, with unblinking eye, and unwearied wing, soars with rapid and upward flight towards the sun: or rather, should seek to resemble the cherubic figures, concentrating in himself, and exhibiting in his conduct, in reference to salvation, the patient industry of the ox, the speed of the eagle, the courage of the lion, and all this directed by the intelligence of the man.

And what can, or will, keep up such a diligent regard to heavenly realities? There is but one thing that will do it, and that is HOPE: and this will do it. The power of this to inflame the human mind will be in exact proportion to the importance of its object, the probability of obtaining it, and the intensity of desire to possess it. Apply this to salvation, and you will then perceive its meaning, its truth, and its force, as a motive power.

6. *Spiritual joy* has considerable power in maintaining our perseverance in the pursuit of salvation. "The joy

of the Lord is his people's strength," to sustain them under, and carry them through, the trials, difficulties, and duties of the christian state. The more we have of joy and peace, the more we have of manly strength, and robustness, and vigour. Dejection, despondency, and gloom enfeeble the mind in ordinary matters, and so they do in religious ones. Distress paralyses the arm of industry by eating out the power of the nerve of action. Hence the prayer of the apostle for the christian Romans, —"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."—chap. xv, 13. It is of vast importance, not only for the believer's comfort, but for his safety, that this should be his case. He needs peace and joy, not only to make his duties delightful, but to retain his hold on religion altogether. The faith, if it can be called by such a word, that yields no comfort to the soul, will soon be cast away as a worthless thing. A religion that does not bring bliss with it, will soon be likely to be found a hindrance to enjoyment. Professors neither feel nor exhibit the excellence of religion, if they do not "serve the Lord with gladness." We tell the world, in sermons and books, that the springs of happiness lie in true piety, and we should be careful to sustain the assertion by our appearance. We are commanded to let our light shine before men. To do this, we must let our holiness be irradiated by the sunshine of joy. A christian is never giving to his religion its full credit, till he shows that it not only makes him a holy man, or an useful man, but also a *happy* one. The multitude all around him are saying, "Who will show us any good?" He should be able to say, "I will." "Lord, thou hast lifted upon me the light of thy countenance, and put gladness into my

heart." Now it is hope that feeds joy. Hence the apostle's language, "Rejoicing in hope." "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The pleasures of hope have been, as we have already observed, the theme of poetry and song. It is, and must be, a happy state of mind. It is one of the passions, which, in their very exercise, are bliss. They not only bring it, but are it. A child desiring and expecting his toy, is, in so far as that goes, happy; happier, of course, when joy is turned into fruition; but pleased even with his hopes. If the salvation which is in Christ Jesus does not give joy, nothing can; and he who talks of heaven without "rejoicing in hope" of it, does but talk.

7. *Hope gives a foretaste of heaven;* and therefore we are saved by it. Salvation, as we have already showed, is a present blessing: "we *are* saved," and not merely "*shall be.*" What was said to Zaccheus may be said to every repenting and believing sinner, "This day is salvation come to thine house." He who is not saved *now*, will not be hereafter. We know very well that salvation begun on earth will be completed in heaven. But heaven itself does begin on earth—

> The men of grace have found
> Glory begun below;
> Celestial fruits, on earthly ground,
> From faith and hope may grow:

And *do* grow. Grace is glory in the bud: glory is grace in full bloom. Grace is glory militant: glory is grace triumphant. What other honours and felicities heaven will contain, than those we read of in the Bible as *now* promised to the christian, we cannot even conjecture: but there are none, can be none, greater

in kind than those we now possess, either of a relative or a personal nature. We can rise no higher in relationship, than to be a child of God—no higher in moral state, than to be like God—no higher in principles of action, than to love God and our neighbour—and no higher in happiness, than to enjoy God. Now all these we have on earth. True, we have them here only in such small proportions, in such glimpses, in such sips, and amidst so many interruptions, that we can form but a very inadequate idea from them of the heavenly glory. But they are the earnest of our redemption. And we might have a much richer earnest than we have. Others have had it. What a foretaste must John Howe have had, when one night he was in such a holy ecstacy in the view of heaven, that he said to his wife, "Though I love you as much as it is fit for one creature to love another, yet, if it were put to my choice, whether to die this moment or live this night, and by living this night I could secure to myself the continuance of this life for seven years longer, I should choose to die this moment." What a foretaste of heaven must Halyburton have enjoyed, when he had such a view and sense of the excellent glory, that he entreated God to cover that glory with his hand, lest it should overcome his power of endurance. What a prelude of the celestial banquet must Payson have had, when he wrote the following letter:—

"Dear Sister,

"Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan I might date this letter from the land of Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon

me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached; and now he fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my wants: I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion.

"But why do I speak thus of myself and my feelings; why not speak only of our God and Redeemer? It is because I know not what to say. When I would speak of them my words are all swallowed up. I can only tell you what effects their presence produces, and even of these I can tell you but very little. O, my sister, my sister! could you but know what awaits the christian; could you know only so much as I know, you could not refrain from rejoicing, and even leaping for joy. Labours, trials, troubles, would be nothing: you would rejoice in afflictions, and glory in tribulations; and, like Paul and Silas, sing God's praises in the darkest night, and in the deepest dungeon. You have known a little of my trials and conflicts, and know that they have been neither few nor small; and I hope this glorious termination of them, will serve to strengthen your faith, and elevate your hope.

"And now my dear, dear sister, farewell. Hold on your christian course but a few days longer, and you will meet in heaven,

Your happy and affectionate brother,

EDWARD PAYSON."

In these instances we see how much of heaven has been enjoyed on earth, by some of God's saints. And do not the biographies of others teach us the same fact? Yea, have there not been seasons, alas too few and too short, when we ourselves have known something of all this? When we too, have had such joy and peace in believing; such an impression of God's presence; such a sense of his love; such ardent affection for the Saviour, and such communion with him; such a holy serenity of mind; such an elevation above the world—as to lead us to say, "Now I know something about heaven; what it is, and what it must be, when this frame of mind and heart is carried on to absolute perfection."

It is hope that produces this. This passion, when intensely engaged, seems to give a present existence to its object, which stands before the mind with almost the vividness of reality. Hope, in its highest exercises, is a kind of fruition. How important then is its exercise. How desirable to send it across the Jordan, like the spies into the promised land, to fetch the grapes of Eshcol, and thus to be encouraged to go on and take full possession of the heavenly country.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE.

How comes it to pass that so few professors of religion, and even true christians, enjoy and exhibit so little of that joy and peace in believing, which the New Testament declares to be their privilege, and which, it might be supposed, their state and condition warrant and demand? That the great mass of professors *do* appear destitute of this spiritual delight is too notorious to be denied. In affliction are they not as disconsolate as other men? Do not their troubles put out the lights of their comfort and cause them to walk in darkness? In prosperity, how little of their happiness is derived from spiritual sources. The springs of their felicity lie in earthly, rather than in heavenly things. How rare is the case of one whose countenance is generally illuminated with a smile, and that smile the reflection of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. How is this? Why is it that we do not let the light of our joy, as well as of our holiness, shine before men, and thus let our personal history stand as the index that points to the fountain of bliss? Why? Because so many professing christians, to allude to Bunyan's immortal allegory, are imprisoned in "Doubting Castle." How few are there who, if the question were proposed to them, "Are you assured you are a child of God?" would answer even in this modest

language, "I believe I am, and am happy in this delightful persuasion." The greater number would hesitate, and tell you plainly and at once, that they have their doubts and fears about this matter, and cannot really persuade themselves that this is their state. Ought this to be so? Ought a real christian to be in constant, serious doubt whether he *is* a christian? The change produced by the converting grace of God might be supposed, from its nature and greatness, to be its own evidence. It is a change in a man's whole moral nature, if indeed, it really exists. It is a change so accurately described in the Word of God, that any one who will deal honestly with himself, look into his own heart, consult his own consciousness, and compare himself with the Word of God, might know his state. The features of a child of God and of a child of the devil are not so like each other as to be hardly distinguished.

And as reason would lead us to conclude, the state of grace *may be* distinguished from a state of nature; the scriptures every where *assert* that it may be, and suppose that it is. "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life," says the apostle, "because we love the brethren."—1 John iii. 14. And in a subsequent passage of the same epistle, the apostle says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life."—ch. v. 13. Would it not appear strange if there were really no means of knowing that we had really become christians? How could it be said God was "more abundantly willing that we should have strong consolation," if we could have no knowledge he had forgiven our sins and received us to favour, till we reached the heavenly country? It is not only represented as possible that we *may* obtain this blessed

knowledge now, but it is actually made a duty to seek it. "And we desire," says the apostle, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."—Heb. vi, 11. The state of mind here enjoined is not only hope, but the assurance of hope; not only the assurance, but the *full* assurance. This, observe, is not merely held out as a privilege, but enjoined as a duty; and not only a duty for some, but for every one; and a state not occasional, but habitual, not for a time, but "unto the end." This is in accordance with what another apostle enjoins,—"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—2 Peter i, 10. That is, sure to ourselves. Let it then be distinctly understood that assurance is not only the privilege of a few, but the duty of all. And yet how few enjoy it. Why?

Ignorance of its nature keeps many from it. Hence the necessity of explanation. There are three kinds of assurance spoken of in the New Testament. "The full assurance of *understanding*."—Col. ii. 2. This means a clear, comprehensive, and soul-establishing acquaintance with divine truth. "The full assurance of *faith*."—Heb. x. 22. By this we are to understand a strong, settled, unwavering conviction of the truth of the gospel. "The full assurance of *hope*." These three are intimately connected with each other, and one rises out of the other. Here is first a clear understanding of the gospel—then a firm belief of what is so understood—and then the hope of what is believed; a personal knowledge, a personal belief, a personal hope. And the reason why many do not possess the last, is that they do not clearly see, and constantly remember, that it can be obtained only by the two preceding ones.

But what is the true nature of this assurance of *hope?* It must be distinctly borne in mind, that it is only the assurance of *hope*, not of *possession*. Let hope be as confident as it may, it is still *but* hope, and cannot have all the undoubting and absolute certainty of possession. The latter leaves no room for doubt or fear. The former may. By the state of mind therefore indicated by the phrase I am now considering, it is not meant that it consists in the christian's being able to feel and to say, he is as certain of getting to heaven as if he were already there. It is not meant that he possesses such an absolute and undoubting certainty as admits of no degrees; much less a kind of boastful, ostentatious, and vain-glorious confidence of safety. It may be expressed thus: "The Word of God tells me that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved; I am conscious that I have believed in Christ and have thus committed my soul to him; therefore I believe my sins are forgiven, and I hope for eternal salvation. I have such a persuasion of the reality of my faith, therefore of the pardon of my sins, and reconciliation to God, that I have no serious doubt of my being a child of God and an heir of glory." This I call assurance; such a persuasion of our having received the grace of God in our hearts, as excludes distressing doubts and fears. Still it is such a persuasion of our being true believers, as admits of degrees, for we find it so stated in the different passages which refer to it; we have "assurance," "full assurance," and "much full assurance," clearly proving, I repeat, that the word imports a state of mind which admits of various degrees of certainty. Of the very persons who are represented as having "much full assurance," the apostle says that their "faith *grew* exceedingly."—1 Thes. i, 5. But if assurance meant

a state of mind that entirely and for ever excluded all doubt, how could it grow beyond full assurance?

I therefore again say that the Scripture does not warrant us to describe it as going beyond a pleasing and satisfactory conclusion that we have passed from death unto life; which, after all, is very different from that certainty which accompanies possession. How else can we harmonise it with the exhortation to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," or with the other admonition to "fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." There is a wide difference between possessing a calm and comfortable enjoyment of this persuasion of true faith, and being forward to affirm it, and to glory in it before others. A believer may be in the full possession of an inward, tranquil, and even joyful persuasion of his state before God, and of his safety for eternity; and yet not stand ready when the question, "Are you sure you are a child of God?" is put to him by a fellow creature, to reply with an unhesitating boldness, "I am as sure of it, as if I heard a voice from heaven declare it." The right answer to such a question is the following:—"I am a poor, sinful, guilty, lost creature; worthless, helpless, hopeless. But I believe the record God has given of his Son. On him, as the true and only foundation, I place all my hopes of eternal life, and I have therefore joy and peace in believing. Christ is my all. His finished work is the sole ground of my confidence. I think I am accepted of God. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. O to grace, how great a debtor." This I consider the scriptural assurance. It may fall short of the boast of some, but it

accords best with the Word of God, and with the experience of God's saints in general. It is a knowledge that we *have* passed from death to life, though it is a knowledge which is less than that of the absolute and undoubting certainty which some contend for.

This is a blessed state of mind, and much to be desired. *How* blessed to have the great question thus satisfactorily settled, and to be relieved from painful solicitude and distressing fear about our safety for eternity. What, compared with this, is it to have fears about our health, or property, or liberty, or even life, removed? How great, how pure the joy afforded by such a persuasion as this—"Yes, I think I *am* a believer in Christ, a converted man, a child of God, an heir of glory, a traveller to heaven. I *can* say, with unfaltering tongue, O God, thou art my God. Blessed Jesus, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." O, what sunshine does such a persuasion throw over the landscape of life, illumining its barren wastes, and bringing out all the beauty, and verdure, and bloom of its Paradisaic spots. What privations may we not endure, what afflictions bear, when we can say, "God is *my* father, Christ *my* Saviour, salvation *my* portion, and heaven *my* home?" This has carried consolation into the darkest recesses of human woe, the lowest depths of poverty and want. With this, confessors have made the walls of their prison echo with their songs, and martyrs have been happy on the scaffold and at the stake. With this, we may live in happiness and die in peace. It is a jewel worth infinitely more than all the gems which have ever blazed on beauty or royalty. The man who can rejoice in saying he is a christian in reality, need not sigh over anything else that he is *not*.

Let us now consider how it is to be obtained. We shall never have it if we do not *desire* it. Surely if anything be desirable, it must be, or ought to be, this. The absence of all solicitude about such a matter indicates either the total want, or the great weakness, of personal vital religion. That they who are altogether careless about religion should never trouble themselves about the matter, is natural enough, but that *professors* of religion should be indifferent to it, is indeed for a marvel; and yet, I fear it is a subject about which the great bulk of them give themselves no concern. Ask them if they have any good ground to conclude they are the children of God, and are living in the happy persuasion they are safe for eternity, and in multitudes of instances, they will tell you they really do not know, and tell it almost with such an air of levity, as too plainly shows how little interest they take in religion altogether. Such persons may well doubt of their state; they have good reason to doubt. Indifference to the question, "Am I indeed a child of God?" is a sad and sure indication of an unchanged heart. But even good people are not so earnest about this matter as they ought to be. With them it is too generally left undecided, and in many cases because undesired. Is it not to be coveted that we should go on our way rejoicing to everlasting glory? Is it not desirable that, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, we should get out of Doubting Castle, and repose amidst the beauties of the Delectable Mountains of assurance?

Self examination is essential to this blessed state of mind. "Examine yourselves," says the apostle, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."—2 Cor. xiii, 5. It is a matter of infinite

and eternal importance that is at stake,—the soul, and the soul's salvation. A mistake here is an appalling matter, an error that will require an eternity to understand, and an eternity to deplore. And the necessity for examination lies in the deceitfulness of the heart, in the liability of us all, and at all times, to false opinions of our state, and in the multitude that are thus deceived.—See Matt. vii, 20-23. We must therefore examine whether our faith be real or nominal; and we must also "*prove* ourselves." Now this proof is to be obtained partly by looking into our hearts with an earnest, anxious research, and a comparison of their habitual state with the Word of God, and especially by making trial of our faith in its influence upon our life.

It is of great consequence that we ever bear in mind that *this* assurance must be reached through the other two,—the assurance of understanding and of faith,—and will be in proportion to them. As is our knowledge of the gospel, for clearness, comprehensiveness, and decision, so will be our faith. The hesitating, doubting, wavering faith of many, arises from their dim and cloudy perception of divine truth. They do not see very clearly *what* they are to believe. The vague object is perceived like the outline of a coast seen from a great distance at sea, but which can hardly be distinguished from a cloud, and consequently the belief by the sailors that it *is* land is very feeble and fluctuating. Such, and such only, are the knowledge and faith of many real believers. They are not bible students and proficients. It is impossible to found a confident expectation upon a feeble conviction; it would be like attempting to build a castle upon a quicksand. Christ, salvation, heaven, and eternity, must all be firmly believed as great and

glorious realities before they can become matters of personal and individual expectation. A strong faith must, of necessity, be followed with a lively hope. All attempts to reach this blessed state of mind, but through the previous stages, seem like an effort to reach the top of the ladder without treading upon the intermediate steps.

It is apparent, then, that the assurance of hope is obtained in these two ways—by *consciousness*, and by *examination*. I am told in the Bible that every one who believes in Jesus Christ is pardoned, received to the favour of God, has a title to eternal life, and will be received up into glory. I am conscious I *do* believe. Knowing the acts of my own mind, I know that I commit my soul into the hands of Christ for salvation. Still, as I have said, the heart is deceitful above all things, and as I am liable to have my judgment imposed upon by self-love, I must not trust to this consciousness alone, but must subject that to a test. As far as I know myself I am conscious of faith in Christ, but I will test that faith, and the hope which is founded upon it. How? "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."—1 John v. 13. Consciousness therefore is not the only test, but what is *written*, *i. e.*, the Word of God. We are to bring ourselves to this touchstone, and say, "Do my faith and hope answer to that? Do I see in my heart, life, and character, the stamp of Scripture? Has this seal of the Spirit left its corresponding impression upon my soul?"

Perhaps it will be said, this is an operose, tedious, and doubtful method after all. But is it scriptural? This is evident by an appeal to the Bible. "We know," says

the apostle, "we have passed from death unto life." How? By consciousness only? By revelation, impression, dream, or vision? No: "*Because we love the brethren.*" We cannot know it without this; we may know by it. And I may remark in passing, that this love to the brethren is of itself, when rightly understood, a decisive proof of true christian piety. But what is this love? Not a love to those of our congregation, our denomination, our relations, but to *all* real christians; for he who loves not all, does not love any *as* christians: nor is it merely a love to them as containing many pleasing, amiable, and useful qualities; nor merely a love to the more lovely of them, but a love to even the more unattractive of them, and all this because God loves them—because they belong to him, and really love him; a love to them because they are holy, and bear God's image: a love that overleaps the barriers of sect, and party, and church, and nation, and that says, and feels what it says, "Show me a human being whom God loves, and that loves God, and bears his image; and no matter the nation, or the church to which he belongs; no matter the colour of his skin, or his rank in life; he may be a negro or a pauper; he may have some unlovely external aspects,—but I own, I love, and I will help that man as a brother in Christ. I feel myself identified with him, and can say, and do feel what I say, 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.'" The man who can say this, *is* a christian, and has the assurance of hope. Similar language we find in a subsequent chapter of the same epistle, v. 1-3.

I am aware that a shorter and more direct manner of arriving at this conclusion is contended for by some, who bring forward for this purpose the words of the apostle,

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."—Rom. viii. 16. The idea which many entertain of this witness is, that it is a direct and immediate suggestion, impression, and indeed, revelation to the individual who receives it, that his sins are pardoned, and that he has received a title to heaven. Now I think this a mistaken view of the apostle's meaning, and for the following reasons:—In this revelation or impression there is nothing necessarily holy in its nature. An impression or revelation may be made to an unholy mind, as was done in the case of Balaam, and many others. Then, as a revelation from God, it would seem to require something to authenticate it as such. This view is also contrary to the other parts of God's Word, which represent the evidence of pardon, true personal godliness, and safety, to consist of what is practical in us. It seems calculated to lead to great delusion; for how liable should we be to confound such a direct revelation with the mere impression of our own minds. Many who profess to have received it, have, by their subsequent conduct, *proved* that they were deluded; while multitudes of those who are true christians, are not conscious of any such testimony. Moreover, it is inharmonious with the context of the passage on which it is founded, which is entirely practical; the design of the apostle, from the beginning of the chapter, being to show that holiness is the evidence of our being united to Christ by faith, and that the spirit of the gospel, as distinguished from the spirit of the law, is a spirit of adoption, and not of bondage. Now this spirit of adoption, or the spirit of a child, is itself the witness of the Spirit. The spirit of a child is love, confidence, freedom: this is also the spirit of a child of God, and the production of it is the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul.

Understand, then, that the witness of the Spirit is our possessing this filial disposition, which characterises every child of God. It has been well said, that in a true christian's devout aspiration, it is not from instruction or habit, but from spontaneous impulse, that he exclaims, "Our Father." His thoughts go out after God. His heart yearns for him. His soul longs with unutterable longings for his abiding presence. He comes with a truly filial spirit before God, and it is perfectly easy and natural for him to say, "Our Father." He is the *child* of God, and he does or may know it. Being the child of his Father, and away from his Father's house, he thinks of it with pleasure, and dwells with delight on his going home at last, and is sometimes homesick, as children that are kept at school away from their parents think of the day of their vacation, when they shall go home. These yearnings are the testimony of the Spirit that we are the children of God. The man who has these feelings habitually, need not hesitate to call himself a child of God. This is laid down in the Word as descriptive of the Spirit's work in the heart, and thus the conformity of the Spirit's work in the Word and in his soul being ascertained by the believer, he comes to the knowledge of his state. "The case," says Dr. Wardlaw, "stands thus:—The Holy Spirit speaks in the Word. The same Spirit operates in the heart. There must be a correspondence between his testimony in the Word, and his operation in the heart. The evidence lies in this correspondence. We take the divine Word as dictated by the Spirit, and containing a declaration of his mind; we see there what he testifies, we see especially the description which he gives of the faith and character of God's children; if

'*our* spirits,' in the court of conscience, and before the Father of our spirits, bear witness to a correspondence between this description and what has been effected in us by the Divine Agent, then there is a concurrence of the testimonies. The testimony of God's Spirit and the testimony of our spirits agree. The one witnesseth or evidenceth to the other. In proportion as we have the inward consciousness of this harmony do we possess the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God."

"What," says Jonathan Edwards, "has led to the notion of a direct witness of the Spirit apart from this consciousness of conformity of his work in the heart, and with his testimony in the Word, is the word '*witness*' of the Spirit? Hence they have taken it to be, not any work of the Spirit upon the heart giving evidence whence men may argue that they are the children of God, but an inward immediate suggestion, as though God invariably spoke to man and told him that he was his child, by a kind of secret voice or impression. The manner in which the word '*witness*' or testimony is often used in the New Testament, is the holding forth of evidence from whence a thing may be argued and proved to be true, examples of which may be found in Heb. ii, 4; Acts xiv, 3; John v, 36, x, 25. When the Scripture speaks of the *seal* of the Spirit, which means the same as the *witness*, it is an expression which properly denotes not an immediate voice or suggestion, but some work or effect of the Spirit, left as a divine mark upon the soul, to be an evidence by which God's children are to be known. When God sets his seal upon a man's heart by his Spirit, there is some holy stamp, some image impressed and left upon the heart by the Spirit, as by the seal upon the wax. This mark enstamped by the Spirit upon God's children is his

own image, and this is the very thing which in Scripture is called *the seal of the Spirit*, and *the witness or evidence of the Spirit*."

Still, I will not deny that there are seasons when the Spirit of God shines in, by his gracious and sovereign illumination, upon his own work in the soul, enabling the believer to recognise, with unusual clearness, his spiritual state as a child of God, assisting him to come to a more unhesitating, undoubting conclusion that he is going on to heaven, and shall finally reach it through all opposition and difficulties. At such times God does come to them with his richest consolations, to be his own present witness in the believer's soul, to disperse doubts, to dissipate fears, and to assure his heart. Surely you who read this know something about it. Times have been, if they are not now, when you felt these comforts in your soul, and rose into the exclamation, "I have found it, I have found it." God came to you; he soothed, softened, and persuaded your heart. Perhaps you were in the closet, observing a season of humiliation and prayer, or engaged in some difficult and self-denying service, or on a bed of sickness, or at the Lord's supper; still it was something more than mere impression, it was the Spirit shining upon his own work; bringing out in strong relief the characters he had impressed on the soul, and assisting you to say, with an unwavering tongue, "I *am* my beloved's, and he is mine."*

A question, perhaps, will here be asked by some, whether this assurance may be obtained at the time of conversion, or must be waited for, and sought in the progress of

* Jonathan Edwards on the Religious Affections, vol. iv, p. 132.

sanctification. No doubt it *may* be, and in many cases *is*, the blessed privilege of some in the very first stage of their religious history. The Philippian jailor, no doubt, possessed it on the very night of his conversion. The three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost appear to have possessed it at the time of their reception of the gospel. They believed, rejoiced, and hoped. They were conscious they believed, and seem to have had no doubt of their faith. These, however, were *sudden* conversions, in one case from Paganism and the other from Judaism, in each of which the change was so great, so clear, and so decisive, that the consciousness of the internal renovation must have been all but absolute and undoubting certainty. And in many modern cases of sudden conversion, the same conclusive evidence must appear to the subjects of it. Such persons are too apt to suppose that all who really believe *must* as soon as they believe have a full assurance of both faith and hope; forgetful of the very slow steps by which many who have all their lives enjoyed gospel privileges, come to the persuasion that they have "the faith of God's elect." To affirm that every sinner, on his first believing apprehension of the gospel, *must* have this full assurance, this undoubting confidence, is to affirm that the discernment and faith of all believing sinners must, at the very outset, be the same, and that in all it must be perfect.* In very many cases, even the assurance of faith is not attained till after long struggles with doubt, and long struggles after holiness; and till there be a settled consciousness of faith, there can be no assurance of hope.

We now take up another inquiry of great interest and

* Wardlaw on Assurance, p. 146.

importance. "How comes it to pass that so many professors do not possess this assurance?" Very many ought *not* to possess it. They have no right to it. They are better without it. In their case it would be sheer presumption and delusion. They are but *nominal* believers; yet even many of those, I am aware, have a vague and general persuasion of safety. They are professors; church members; have been admitted to the sacrament; have there received a certificate of personal piety, and conclude, without fear or care, that all is safe. Not only in the Church of Rome, but in all other churches established and unestablished, are many who have not indeed the assurance of understanding, not the assurance of faith, not the assurance of hope in the scriptural meaning of the term, but a *false* assurance, the assurance of ignorance, of delusion, of profession. Theirs is but "the hope of the hypocrite, which will perish in the day when God taketh away his soul." The extreme worldliness of a large proportion of professors of all denominations, too clearly proves that their hearts cannot be right in the sight of God, that they are going on with their profession as a lie in their right hand, and with that confident expectation of heaven, which will end in the bitter anguish of disappointment; and thus, when they hoped to awake up from the sleep of death in Paradise, they will lift up their eyes in the torments of the bottomless pit.

Among real christians there is, as we have already said, a lamentable degree of uncertainty about their spiritual state. Comparatively few are living in the happy persuasion of their eternal safety, and are comforted with the idea they are going to glory. Of these, some are too lukewarm and too worldly in the habitual

frame of their minds, too partially sanctified in their temper and spirit, for their faith to be self-evident to their consciousness. There may be the root of the matter in them, the principle of faith, but it is so deeply covered over with obstruction as not to be allowed to sprout: or so choked with thorns when it begins to grow, that its life can be scarcely discerned. The cares of business or of domestic life, the taste for luxurious ease and indulgence, the practice of worldly amusements now too common among professors, wither and shrivel their piety. How *can* they, amid such circumstances, be assured of their eternal happiness?

No wonder if when asked whether they really believe they are children of God, they shake their head and say they have no assurance. This heavenly exotic cannot grow in such soil and in such an atmosphere. They must have a stronger faith in things unseen and eternal; a faith that overcomes this world by the belief of another, before they can rejoice in an assured hope of life eternal. Doubts and fears are the weeds indigenous to the barren soil of lukewarm piety. These lukewarm professors almost make a merit of their doubts and fears, and by a most fatal delusion seem to think they offer amends for their want of spiritual religion by a spurious kind of humility. You will not unfrequently hear them say to more vigorous and happy christians, "Ah, it is all very well for you to talk about assurance, though it seems almost presumptuous for *you;* but as for me, I am content to go humbly to heaven, and shall think myself well off if I can get within the doors, just over the threshold. My language is

> A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On thy kind arms I fall;
> Be thou my strength and righteousness,
> My Jesus and my all.

What, in many cases, is the meaning of all this? Why, "I have so little religion and so much of the world mixed up with it, that I do not know whether I have any at all." It is the resort and refuge of the lukewarm, the careless, and the indolent: the piteous cry of the spiritual sloth. There are, I am aware, timid, yet spiritual minds to whom this will not apply; whose doubts and fears are the natural product of their physical organisation, or their partial understanding of their privilege, and who shrink from this happy persuasion of safety as from unwarranted presumption. So did not the prophet Habakkuk when he said, "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet as hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon my high places." Christians should all seek, like the chamois upon the mountain bounding from height to height, to ascend the high places of christian experience, and go from one eminence of holy joy to another.

Ignorance, I repeat, of what assurance really means, is the cause why many do not enjoy it. They want, and suppose they are warranted to expect, a certainty of reaching heaven as undoubting as if they were within its gates. They hear many, in somewhat ostentatious language, boasting of this undoubting certainty, speaking as confidently as if they not only stood upon the threshhold of heaven, but had passed through its gates. "If this be assurance," say they, "I know nothing of it." They had *better* know nothing of it, for it savours of presumption. Toplady's couplet is not borne out by Scripture, where when speaking of God's people he says,

> More blessed, but not more secure,
> The glorified spirits in heaven.

This may be true in reference to the purpose of God,

but not in reference to our condition, for we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Diffidence keeps some from this state of mind. Diffidence, when nothing more than self-jealousy arising out of the knowledge of the heart's deceitfulness, is a salutary and proper condition of the soul. "Blessed is the man that feareth always." But the diffidence that keeps the soul from the enjoyment of its privileges, and also the performance of its duties, which holds it in despondency, and causes it to go sorrowing when it should go rejoicing, is a fault, yea, a sin. I know that it is an infinite and eternal matter that is at stake—that a mistake in such a concern is also an infinite and eternal mischief—and that many *do* mistake; but surely even these considerations should not hinder you from the enjoyment of assurance, if you are really conscious of the sincerity of your faith, and that consciousness is upheld by the practical love of God. Do not deem this happy state of mind presumption in you. You are authorised, invited, yea, even commanded to indulge it. Be humble; for you ought to be: but be joyful. See to it that you are building upon the only true foundation, which is Christ, and are adding to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity; and then look up, even with the consciousness of many imperfections and short-comings, to the glory to be revealed, and exultingly say, "It is mine." Do not be afraid of your privileges. Remember that the exercise of your affections towards Christ is not your justifying righteousness, but Christ himself: whom, though you love him sincerely, you can never love sufficiently.

There are many who profess to *have* this full assurance

of hope. They are confident of their safety. I have no objection to this state of mind when it is well founded and properly expressed. When antinomianism was more prevalent than happily it now is, there was a spurious assurance amongst its professors which rested in a strong presumption of their election by God. They valued themselves on their supposed soundness in the doctrines of grace, and looked with supercilious contempt on those who really built their hope of salvation upon Christ, but did not go all lengths with them in their views of divine sovereignty in the salvation of sinners. They were loud in their boasts of being delivered from the bondage of slavish fears, of the certainty of their election, and of their reaching heaven at last. "They were pharisaical foes of pharisaism, uttering the spirit of the pharisee in the language of the publican, humbling themselves in words with a conscious self-elation at their humbling themselves so well. Whatever were their professions, they built their assurance, not on the rock of ages, but on a concealed part of self. There was no great difference between them and the legalists, whom they despised, and against whom they bitterly inveighed; those thought to gain heaven by *doing*, these by *knowing*, which they mistook for believing. They proposed to build their hopes upon Christ, but forgot that he must be a Christ believed in, loved, and obeyed, as well as talked of. They were so valiant for the truth that many of them contended for it at the tavern and upon the ale bench." Happily, I say, this sect has sunk, but perhaps some near akin to it still remain, who need to be reminded that no assurance is of a right kind which does not make its possessor *holy*, instead of being worldly and careless about sin; *humble*, in opposition to

pride; *modest* and *retiring*, instead of being ostentatious and obtrusive; and *loving* and charitable, instead of being intolerant, censorious, and contemptuous.

Before I conclude this chapter, I would say a few words concerning that excessive solicitude about their spiritual state, and that constant exercise of introspection in which some really good people and spiritually-minded christians indulge. They are too much like some dyspeptic patients who are distressingly nervous about their health. These persons are ever anxiously feeling their pulse, minutely watching their symptoms, and studiously consulting books on dietetics and disease. The least variation of their sensations occasions alarm, as if some mortal disease had just put out a prognosis of death. How much better, and how much more comfortable would these self-distressed and often inert patients be, if, after having ascertained, which by medical help they might do, that there was no serious disease, they went forth into the active world, and gave their fears to the wind. There are nervous patients in the spiritual world as well as the natural one;—good people, whose whole life nearly is spent in looking into their hearts, analysing their spiritual symptoms, and drawing hopeful or unfavourable conclusions concerning their eternal safety; now hoping, then fearing; to-day all cheerfulness, to-morrow all gloom; at one time, because a little more free and earnest in prayer, or happy in feeling, going on their way rejoicing, and, at another, journeying with downcast looks, because of supposed indifference and lukewarmness. Far be it from me to take off the attention of any one from "keeping the heart with all diligence," or abating one atom of that godly fear and jealousy which we ought all to maintain over ourselves, or letting down our

watchfulness, or slackening our diligence; but surely having examined ourselves and come to a well-founded conclusion that we have passed from death unto life, our christian life ought not to be spent in this state of spiritual nervousness; and I advise such sufferers to be looking more to Jesus, and less to themselves; to employ themselves in all the activities of the christian life, and they may be assured that exercise will as certainly promote the health of the soul as it does that of the body.*

* Many of the remarks of this chapter have already appeared in my former work "The Course of Faith," in the chapter on "The Assurance of Faith." The repetition here was unavoidable, and in that work, as well as in this, I have borrowed some thoughts from Dr. Wardlaw's treatise.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AUTHOR OF HOPE.

EVERY good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a turning. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."—James i, 17. This is true of every temporal benefit. God is the fountain of all good, even of that which has reference to the body. All mercies must be traced to him as their true source. This is especially the case of all spiritual blessings. *Their* springs are all in heaven. The whole work of grace in the soul is God's doing. Regeneration contains enfolded in itself all the graces of the Spirit, just as all the parts of the ripe corn in the ear are all comprehended in the germ of the grain that is sown in the earth. But, as in the latter case, the fostering influence of the soil and the elements are necessary to bring out the blade and the ear, so God's grace, in the conversion of the soul, which has given the seminal principle of all its various developments in sanctification, still carries on the process of the new creation. Each manifestation of spiritual life requires a separate and specific operation of divine power. We must look to God for each, and expect each from him. Faith is one gift of his hand, hope is another, love is another, and so of all the exercises that go to make up

the christian character. We find that this accords exactly with our own experience. We do not in prayer merely ask for grace for the christian life as a whole, but for grace in each part. We often feel our need of one virtue more strongly at one time, and in particular circumstances, than another, and our errand to the throne is for special help with regard to that one grace.

This applies to the grace we are now considering, I mean, hope, of which God is the author. It is worthy of remark, that we know God more by what he is to us, than what he is in himself,—more by his works, than by his abstract nature,—more, in short, by what he does, than by what he is. In himself he is not only an eternal truth, but an infinite mystery. Who, by searching, can find out God? How can the finite grasp the infinite? And is it not an approach of God, one step nearer to our conceptions of him, when he is revealed to us by his special operation in the production of individual christian virtues? Thus he is called "the God of peace," "the God of all consolation," and "the God of hope." This cannot relate to what he is in his own nature, but what he is to us. He is the God of hope in every aspect of the case. He commands it, approves it, and is indeed the object of it, but the true meaning is, that he is the *Author* of it. The exercise of it in the soul of the believer is the work of his own Spirit. Not only is the principle of it implanted in the soul, but every exercise of it is called out by his grace. It is a part of his own working in us "to will and to do."

Christian hope, in its true meaning, is a great, a difficult, and, therefore, a rare thing. There is really very little of it in the world. If it meant nothing more than that loose, vague, cold, careless, and uninfluential

expectation of some kind of happiness somewhere in a place called heaven, which most men, however worldly or wicked indulge, there is plenty of this, and which needs no act of divine power to produce it. This is easy enough and common enough. But such a desire and expectation of the eternal world as is set forth in the Scriptures, which shall give a present kind of reality to it, which shall keep the soul diligent in all christian duties, patient under all trials, and holy amidst temptations; such a hope as subordinates earthly things to heavenly ones, and temporal matters to eternal ones; this is a state of mind too rarely found on earth, and wherever it *is* found, is always the work of divine grace. A man can no more rise to this exaltation without divine aid, than he can, by his own strength and effort, fly up to the clouds. The object of hope, when rightly understood, is so vast, so wonderful, so transcending all our conceptions, being immense, infinite, and eternal,—we ourselves are so utterly unworthy of it, all our circumstances in this world of visibilities tend so entirely to draw away our attention from it, on account of its being altogether invisible and impalpable,—so many things here demand and deserve our attention,—so many appearances, if we were to judge only by sense, seem to render it probable that death is the end of us all, and so many believe it to be so,—that really when we come to consider the matter deliberately and intelligently, we must at once be convinced that a settled practical hope of eternal life beyond the grave is not within the compass of man's unaided powers. To lift the soul above the predominant influence of things seen and temporal, and bring it within the attraction of things unseen and eternal, is the work of Omnipotence alone. Hence it is said, "Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to a lively (living) hope." And he who begins the work of hope must carry it on. God, in conversion, gives no stock of grace that renders us independent of him for sanctification, nor in giving us any particular religious principle, gives us a sufficiency of strength for all its future exercises. There is no clock-work mechanism in religion, which, being wound up and set a going, may be left to itself to work on. Whatever of general laws there may be in either the natural or spiritual world, it is still true of both, that in him we not only live, but move, and have our being.

This is full of instruction, admonition, and consolation to the real christian. It teaches him his dependance upon God for this, as well as for every other part of the christian character. It shews him where to look, and where to go, and what to do, in order to maintain this delightful state of soul. It is well to become most intimately acquainted with all that stands connected both with our safety and comfort in the divine life. Let the believer who is anxious, not only to maintain, but to strengthen his desires and expectations of eternal glory, never forget that in this, as in every other respect, he is just what divine grace makes him. Let him beware of thinking he is equal to this, or anything else that is good of himself. It is a dangerous thing to suppose that anything spiritual is easy, and to lose sight for a moment of our need of divine help. But this is not only instructive, but admonitory. If every exercise of hope be performed by a divine power working in us, how constant, earnest, and believing should be our prayers for divine grace to assist us. What a subject for prayer! Christian hope! How

necessary for our sanctification and consolation. What a motive this to prayer. Let us make this a special subject of believing supplication. *Have* we done this? *Are* we doing it? Are we not too general in our petitions at the throne of grace? Do we analyse the one generic subject of religion, and resolve it into its specific and various parts of faith, hope, and love, and make each by itself a separate object of desire and subject of prayer? Do we at one time dwell specially upon belief, and, with enlargement of soul, pray, "Lord, increase my faith?" Do we at another dwell upon hope, and pray that we may "abound in this grace also?" Do we, at a third time, expatiate in our supplications upon love, and entreat that we may "increase more and more in this, in knowledge, and in all judgment?" If we observe the apostle's order and method of prayer for the churches, this was his way of procedure. Did he not pray, in reference to the graces we are now considering, that the believing Romans may abound in hope? Were we as much in earnest as we should be, we should, in regard to our soul's concerns, be far more particular than we are; we should descend more to detail, and attend more to the several parts of religion; we should exercise our care for our souls as we do for our bodies. In reference to the latter, we do not think it enough to attend to the general state of our health, and keep up the tone of our constitution, though this is very important, but we descend to a minute inspection and care of every part of every limb, every organ, every function; we consider which is weak and needs strengthening, which is diseased and requires remedy. Let us then be much in prayer to God for an increase of hope.

And then, how consolatory is it to know that God is

both able and willing to bestow it upon us. Why is he called "the God of hope," but to encourage our prayers? It is a sweet invitation, a blessed attraction, a kind of motive power, that he is thus set before us. Why, believer, he is "the God of hope." It is one of his very titles. He is "waiting to be gracious." He is glorified in bestowing this grace. He can, and will, if you ask him, fill you with hope even to the full assurance. It is your own fault if you are not "*rejoicing* in hope." There is no obstacle but your own unbelief. You are straitened in yourselves, not in him. He can "do above all you ask or think." Try him. You never have yet done this as you should. You have not perhaps wanted to abound in this grace; you are contented with the scanty measure you have; or you are in doubt and unbelief, and are ready to imagine *you* can never rise above your present low level. Cast away such unworthy ideas, and go to God strong in faith to be made more earnest in desire, more confident in expectation, and you shall be astonished at your success.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOPE AS AN ANCHOR.

THIS figure of speech, which is a very instructive and impressive one, is found in a passage of Holy Writ, as striking, perhaps, in some respects, as any that can be found in the Bible. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." —Heb. vi. 17-19. Such is the cable, if I may so speak, strong and infrangible, to which the anchor is fixed. This passage is so rich in all that can confort the heart of the believer, that before we come to the particular portion of it which is the subject of this chapter, we may glance at its general contents.

The persons for whom this wonderful passage is intended, are described by two things—first, as "The heirs of promise." This refers to the promise made to Abraham of the Messiah, "in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed," a promise which comprehends in itself all the blessings of the New Covenant. Of this vast possession every true believer is an heir.

Under each and every one of the covenanted blessings, he may write, "mine;" all those promises which are "exceeding great and precious," which are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus," are his own to be appropriated as occasion may require. How rich, how vast, how inexhaustible a possession! Such a man need not envy the heir to a peerage or a throne. But the believer is also described as one who had "fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him." In this there is an allusion to the manslayer, who had unintentionally slain a fellow-creature, and had betaken himself to the city of refuge provided by the law of Moses, where he was safe from the avenger of blood. Thus the believer has fled to Christ our hope, and is safe in him from the sword of divine justice. Safe in Christ! Oh: what ineffable peace does that thought afford. Safe as Noah in the ark, when the deluge was rising and roaring around.

And what does the passage say of these happy people? Why that "God is more abundantly willing that they should have"—what? Salvation? Yes, but more than that, "*strong consolation!*" Not only the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, but consolation on the way to it,—a happy home at the end of the journey, and a happy journey to it. There is a fulness and richness of expression here which is surprising. The text speaks not only of consolation, but *strong* consolation. Not only that God is "willing" they should be consoled, but "*abundantly* willing," yea, "*more*" abundantly willing. It is delightful to dwell on this iteration and re-iteration of terms, this heaping of expression upon expression, to shew how intent God is, not merely upon the happiness of his people in heaven, but their comfort upon earth. He is not willing they should go sorrowing

and downcast to glory, but that they should go on their way rejoicing, yea, "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads;" that they should go singing to their crown. A gloomy, dejected, depressed believer is acting in opposition to God's intention. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. Take your harp from the willows, sorrowful men. *You* may "sing the Lord's song in a strange land," for you are on your way out of it. You have Canaan's goodly country in view. Let the joy of the Lord be your strength.

And what has God done to furnish and promote this consolation? What has he *not* done? What has he left undone? The apostle tells us of "the immutability of God's counsel." What counsel? His counsel about our salvation. This word "counsel," applied to man, means conference between different persons, deliberation, decision guided by, and based upon, patient consideration. But with whom "did God take counsel, who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" If the word mean anything more than infallible wisdom and action which is the result of Omniscience, it can refer only to that same mysterious conference of which the historian of man's fall speaks,—where God is represented as saying, "Let *us* make man in our image." Every thing God does is the effect of counsel with himself. Every thing in nature, and in providence, and especially in grace, is wisely done,—it is all right, good, best,—all the effect of counsel. *This* counsel means his fixed, wise, and benevolent purpose to save all who believe the gospel. What if this purpose, like the plans and purposes of man, *could* be changed? Why then, the heavens might be clothed in sackcloth,

and the earth in mourning. Then we might call on universal nature to become vocal, and utter one loud, deep groan. But what saith God? "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."—Isaiah liv. 10. If God changed his plans; if he were controlled by caprice; if he willed one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow, who could confide in him, or have any hope of heaven? If he *could* change in his purpose and his plans, we could, at best, possess only a trembling and uncertain expectation of eternal life. All we *could* say, is, that it is possible or probable we might be saved, but there could be no certainty. Not only could there be no *strong* consolation, but no consolation at all. Every thing therefore depends upon the divine immutability. Hence his own glorious declaration, "I, the Lord, change not:" and hence also the apostle's beautiful description of God, as "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of change." —James i. 17. Believer, is not *this* "strong consolation?" You have scarcely any thing certain but your salvation; and that *is* certain. God has purposed it, planned it, promised it; and God cannot change. Lift up your eyes to yon snow-crowned mountain; lift them higher still to that blazing sun; higher still to those fixed stars, and you may sooner expect all these to change, and to sink again into the nothing from which the Creator called them forth, than God's purpose to change, and your salvation, if you are a true christian, to fail. Let us luxuriate in the idea that amidst all the mutabilities of earth and time, all the vicissitudes of human affairs—and, indeed, what is humanity in all its

range of events but one endless series of change—still there is one Being who is unchangeable, and that is God; one event that is certain, and that is salvation. The immutability of God is the crowning glory of his character; for what would be all the other glories, if it were possible they could change? This is equally the bliss of angels and of men; is no less the guarantee of the hopes of the former than of the latter. Christian, hear then with rapture, what God saith, "I, the Lord, change not;" and let that one attribute of Deity be the joy of your heart, and make a separate song of that glorious word, IMMUTABILITY.

But this is not all, for the passage we are considering speaks of our "strong consolation" established by two immutable things. And what are those? The promise and the oath of God.

> His very *Word* of grace is strong,
> As that which built the skies;
> The voice that rolls the stars along
> Spake all the promises.

"Give me your *word* of promise," we say to a man of known and tried veracity, "and it is as good as your bond." But still his falsehood is possible, though improbable. But it is "*impossible* for *God* to lie." His infinite holiness places lying beyond his capability; under every promise we can write, "True, eternally, unalterably true." Why, then, has he added his OATH? This is a surprising view of God and God's doings. Jehovah is brought before us, in the solemn act of making oath. But to whom shall HE appeal; whom shall he call to witness the truth of his affirmation? "Because he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself." But why, I repeat, this wondrous transaction? Why treat his

promise, as if it required for its credibility the guarantee of an oath? Why thus add immutability to immutability? The apostle answers the question: "An oath for confirmation is the end of all strife." In the intercourse of society, and in the transactions of business, an oath is considered, on account of its solemn appeal to heaven, and its implied imprecation of divine vengeance upon falsehood, an additional ground of confidence, because an additional pledge of veracity. And it is in allusion to this, that God, with infinite condescension to our weakness, adopts our own forms, and adds his oath to his promise, that "by *two* immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." He knows what suspicious, timid, fearful and desponding creatures we are; how powerful our unbelief is, and how weak is our faith: how apt we are to carry our doubts of the veracity of our fellow creatures into our intercourse with Him: and with a stoop of pity to our weakness, he adopts our own customs, takes up the very bonds by which we guard our veracity, and "swears" as well as "promises," that he will save all that believe in Christ. Oh christian, stand amazed at God's condescension and kindness, and blush for thy unbelief and thy cheerlessness, and come into the enjoyment of a strong consolation: and in order to that, come into the exercise of a strong faith.

We now take up the subject of this chapter, which is, *hope considered as the anchor of the soul.* Some have thought there is an appearance of unnaturalness in the apostle's representation of an anchor, "entering within the veil whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." But in fact he does not so represent it. It is only the

hope that enters heaven, not the anchor. True this affection is compared to an anchor, but the metaphor is immediately dropped, and is not intended to be carried to the end of the sentence.*

The apostle, in the former expression, "The hope set before us," speaks of hope objectively, in the latter; subjectively. As the language is a metaphor, shall I be thought wanting in good taste, if I now carry on the figure? I am not prone to this species of composition, and severely condemn it, when applied to Scripture in the way of fanciful interpretation, and when introduced to the pulpit as a means of popularity. Still, we have Scriptural authority for its occasional use. Where the apostle represents the christian life as a conflict, he carries out the first metaphor by an allegory, or, at any rate, a consecutive series of metaphors, into all the details of offensive and defensive warfare. And now, when he speaks of an anchor, may I not innocently, yet briefly, advert to all that is implied by such a figure? An anchor supposes a ship, a ship a voyage, a voyage an ocean, an ocean a haven of destination, and several other particulars. Is not human life often called a voyage, and do we not often speak of embarking on the troubled ocean of human affairs? Upon that ocean, viewed now as lying between earth and heaven, the believer launches his noble ship to pursue her heaven-bound course. This ocean, like every other, is subject to restless and ever changing tides, and

* A similar criticism may be made upon another figurative passage, I mean Heb. iv, 12:—"For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Now it is asked, is there not a confused metaphor here? or, how can it be conceived that the Word of God can act upon the body, and sever its parts? The apostle supposes no such thing.

is exposed to storms above, and to rocks and quicksands below. Amidst winds and waves the christian's vessel ploughs the deep. Precious beyond all estimate is the freight it bears. What was the wealth of the ancient galleons bearing home the treasures of the east, or of our modern steamers laden with the produce of auriferous regions, compared with that which is contained in one human soul? Were all the jewels yet hidden in the veins of the earth, as well as all that are in the possession of men above it, with all the gold Omnipotence ever created, embarked on board the mammoth vessel now preparing, and that ship, with its incalculable cargo, were to sink to the bottom of the ocean, it would be a trifling calamity compared with the loss of one human soul; for, said he who made the soul and the world too, and knows well the comparative value of both, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Such is the treasure on board each vessel that sails on the ocean lying between earth and heaven, time and eternity. What a shipwreck is the loss of a soul! Is there not danger of this? Is not the shore strewed with wrecks, and are not fragments of the broken vessels ever to be seen floating on the surface of the waves? And what is the *chart* by which the mariner is to be guided in his course? The Word of God. This chart is well drawn by the pen of inspiration. There can be no false soundings or layings down here; no omissions of rocks, and shoals,

His design is to represent the sharp and penetrating power of christian truth, and he likens it to the power of a sword, which in its operation, when thrust into the body, separates the soul, *i.e.*, the physical life from the spirit, or immaterial part of our nature, and reaches the very bones and the marrow they contain. These are the adjuncts of the metaphor, or sign, but not of the thing signified. The Word is like a sharp sword, which thus operates in the hand of him that holds it.

and quicksands; no want of land marks and beacons. All that is necessary to ensure a safe voyage is explicitly indicated. None that consult and follow this can run upon an unknown peril. Do you ask for the *compass*? it is the cross of Christ. He that keeps his eye of faith steadily fixed on that, and steers by it, will never go out of his course. Does the wise mariner approaching a dangerous coast, and entering upon a difficult navigation, trust to his own knowledge, and his own soundings? No. He signals for a *pilot*, and gives up to him the helm and guidance of the ship; and will not the christian mariner trust to the pilotage and guidance of him who calmed the winds and the waves of the sea of Tiberias? Will he not, should he not, give up his whole soul into the hands of Jehovah Jesus? Yes, and in the storm and tempest sing, as well as say, with the poet,—

> Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near,
> And for my relief will surely appear;
> By prayer let me wrestle, and he will perform;
> With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

And then the *haven*, the destined port, the wished for home,—and what is that? The Paradise of God: yes, that is the peaceful haven to which the holy voyager to eternity is directing his course, and steering his vessel; that which is descried by faith, and longed for by hope, is ever seen inviting us to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world are not permitted to invade.

But let us now consider the anchor and its *uses*, and see how far these apply to the grace of christian hope.

An anchor is of use both in a calm and a storm. When a captain intends and desires his ship to remain near the

shore, and especially in a bay, or any exposed situation where the tide runs strong, and there is a somewhat dangerous roadstead, he takes great care to secure, if possible, a good anchorage, and the anchor is immediately dropped to prevent the ship from being drifted ashore by the tide, which, without this precaution, would inevitably be the case when the tide is flowing. Vessels, therefore, without the anchor, would be stranded in a calm as well as wrecked in a storm.

So is it in the christian life. There also is the tide setting in, and oh, how strongly, upon the shores of earth. The world is indeed a dangerous foe to grace. To very, very many it is the most destructive one. They are not so likely to be subdued by vice as by worldly-mindedness. It would not, I know, be safe to say of any who are yet in the flesh, however strong in virtue, that immorality is impossible with them, but we may say of multitudes, that it is in the last degree improbable. All may see just reason to say, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins," for Satan, the tempter, has no respect for age, experience, office, rank, or sex, and would be glad to catch in the toils of vice the old and saintly, as well as the young, professor. Yet it is not thus that he attempts to ruin the great majority of souls; it is by worldly-mindedness, by which I mean a predominant and all but supreme and exclusive regard to "things seen and temporal."

There are two or three things which, in setting forth this subject, must be taken into consideration, such as that God in Christ is the supreme object of a true christian's love, the chief source of his felicity, the highest end of life. The salvation of his soul is the first object of his desire, pursuit, and expectation. The chief end of man, and man's abode on earth, is to glorify God here,

and enjoy him for ever. Our great business on earth is to meeten for heaven, and our main concern in time is to prepare for eternity. Can either of these postulates be denied? If not, let them be well pondered. Let the judgment, heart, will, and conscience, be all summoned to the devout meditation upon them, and then let us say how, in what manner, and to what degree, the world ought to be regarded by us. No object, however lawful in itself, however pure, innocent, or commendable, must be regarded in a way that is incompatible with these acknowledged principles. "*If any man love the world,*" says the apostle, in a passage which ought to ring through all Christendom, and make the ears of millions tingle, and their hearts to palpitate with fear and alarm,—"*If any man love the world,* the love of the Father is not in him." What *is* the world? not merely sin, vice, profligacy, idolatry, infidelity, heresy; oh no, the world contains many things besides the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, more decent, more innocent, more rational, more commendable than these vile objects. Everything on earth, however fair, laudable, and excellent in itself, every thing besides God, is the world. Your business is the world, your family is the world, your house and comfortable home are the world, the wife of your bosom, the children whom God has given you, are the world. "What! then," you exclaim, "are we not to love these?" Yes, in proper degrees, but not more than God. You are not to seek from them your highest happiness. You are not to be more solicitous to secure them than heaven. It is of a *supreme* love the apostle speaks. How plain is this from our Lord's exposition and summary of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, and soul, and strength."

How still more explicit from the other words of Christ, "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." Christian professors, there is need to have these awful, yet righteous demands sent with a voice of thunder into your places of business and scenes of domestic comfort. You have need to be told that all this engrossing solicitude about business; all this eager haste to be rich; all this ambition to add house to house, and field to field; all this taste for elegance, show, and fashion; all this competition for rank, station, office, and publicity, which leads to a neglect of salvation, to departure from God, to indifference to heaven, is the love of the world that is incompatible with the love of the Father; and not less so that supreme and exclusive anxiety about domestic enjoyment, that taste for fashionable amusements, or even that more refined and simple love of home-bred delights, which still leaves out God, salvation, heaven, and eternity. Here, here, I repeat, is your peril. Here the enemy with which you have to do battle. It is not vice, I say, it is not profligacy, it is worldly-mindedness. "THEY MIND EARTHLY THINGS," said the apostle, when speaking of the enemies of the cross of Christ. On the other hand, when speaking of the temper of his friends and followers, he says, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The christians of early days appear to have done all things with an eye to heaven and eternity; "their buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage; their weepings and rejoicings, were all measured, and checked, and subdued by the remembrance that the time is short, and that the fashion of this world passeth away. They had

subdued the world by faith, and so lived as they would desire to be found by him at his coming." There was a two-fold process ever going on within them,—the energy of a daily life, and the fixed contemplation of Christ's advent. The ever-present consciousness of their Master's nearness was like some deep under-tone which runs through a strain of music, and gives it a staid and solemn spirit. Ah, how different is it with professors now. Do we not see them throwing themselves wholly, body, soul, and spirit, into their trade, into the cherished objects of their ambition, into their entire devotedness to a worldly life. In these things, and for them, they live; these things bind round and overgrow their heart, and stifle all holy thoughts, and smother all heavenly desires. They have no other energy of hope and fear, and neither look nor wait for anything beyond. The great future has no power over them, the high heaven no fascinations to attract them; these are too far off, too dimly seen, and too unsubstantial, to counterpoise the gain of to-day or the pleasures of to-morrow.

The road that leadeth to destruction is broad enough to comprise many parallel paths in it, and there is one crowded with professors of religion, walking in company, with cheerful mien, and elegant attire, and elastic step, but still walking to perdition. Oh, yes, there is a way through the church, a decent, flowery, down-hill way to eternal destruction, and many there be that take that road. And even where worldliness is not so predominant and exclusive as all this, yet it is in a multitude of professors far too prevailing. It is the sin of the age, and has deeply infected the church of Christ. While many are sunk in the mire, and are sure to perish in their worldly sins, multitudes more are sadly bespattered and

have their feet so laden with thick clay, as to render their progress slow, and their perseverance doubtful. The watchmen on the walls and towers of Zion had need to sound their loudest voice of alarm against this destructive foe, and tell the luxurious and slumbering inhabitants of the city that a mighty foe is at the gates, and has already made an entrance into the place. This soft effeminacy, this Sybarite slothfulness, this ease-loving disposition, are the bane of the present generation of professing christians. The robustness of spiritual strength, the hardihood of christian courage, the self-sacrificing disposition of ardent love, the cross-bearing temper of ever enduring self-denial, where are they? The church is reposing too much in the lap of the world, or drowsily reclining on her bosom. I do not forget that at, the very time I am penning these lines, the tribes are going up to Jerusalem to the great festival of christian zeal and benevolence, and the hosts of the Lord are marshalling for conflict with the powers of darkness on the area of Exeter Hall.* This is true, and I rejoice over it with exceeding joy. But what is all this compared with what the church of Christ could do, and ought to do; with what professors are doing for themselves, and with that style of self-indulgence in which the great bulk of them are living? Of how many of these may it be said that to get and enjoy the good and the great things of this life, seems to be far more their aim than to secure eternal life, and meeten for its enjoyment. How few really make a *business* of religion, and how much fewer make it their *great* business?

To come back to the subject and metaphor of this chapter, how strong and rapid is the tide of worldly thoughts, feeling, and action, setting in upon the shores

* Written in May.

of earth and time. The language of the poet is what every christian ought to use and to feel,—

> "Still more the treacherous calm I dread,
> Than tempests raging o'er my head."

And what shall preserve us from drifting on the shore, and being stranded there? The anchor. Let go your anchor, believer. You need it, I repeat, even more than in the storm raging on the broad ocean. Why *are* christians so worldly? Why have the scenes and circumstances of earth so powerful an influence over us? Why? Just because our desires and expectations of the eternal realities and infinite possessions of heaven are so little thought of; so little cherished. Were the mind kept in contemplation of these, and the soul more frequently regaled with foretastes of the heavenly food and feast, it could not be content to feed on ashes and on husks. It must feed on something; and in the absence of the former, it will take up with the latter. Did we but consider what heaven is,—how glorious, and how certain, and how near; did we but really let our contemplation more steadily fix upon it; did we but redeem a little more time from secular pursuits and domestic or social pleasures, to meditate upon it; did we really and firmly believe all that is told us of it; did we but inflame our desires after it, and enlarge our expectations of it; did we but get a foresight and foretaste of its vast, rich, and imperishable delights,—how much would our regard to this world be diminished. How would the lights of earth twinkle, and pale, and all but go out, before the beams of the excellent glory. What we have to do then, is to get a more lively hope of this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Have

there not been seasons in the history of every believer, when not only sinful, but lawful sweets were all forgotten, and when earth dwindled in his view to its own insignificance? When even in sight of his possessions, he wondered by what power they had cast such a spell over him. Let us then go into our closet, as into a spiritual observatory, and adjusting the telescope of God's blessed Word to the heavenly object, fix the eye of faith to the lens, and bring eternity and eternal glory near, till our desires after it are kindled to the highest pitch, and our expectations of it are firmly grounded and settled on the basis of divine revelation. Or keeping by the metaphor, let us cast out the anchor, and ride in safety against the strongest tide that sets in upon us. Did we not by experience know the contrary, we should be ready to think that with such an object of hope as heaven, we should find it difficult to be earthly; and yet sad experience teaches us, that surrounded as we are with earthly things, it is difficult to be heavenly. Keep up the power of hope, believer, and that will keep down the power and love of the world. And nothing else will do it.

But there is another use of an anchor than that which we have just considered, and that is to prevent the ship from being wrecked in a storm. Luke tells us, in his description of Paul's shipwreck, that "fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and waited for day." It is an interesting spectacle to see a noble vessel, when the hurricane is hurling winds and waves upon her with a force and fury that threaten every moment to dash her upon the rocks, or cast her upon the shore, held fast by an anchor; and however tossed about by the billows, riding out the tempest; and when the storm is hushed, pursuing her

voyage with her masts all standing, her sails set, her pennant flying, and her crew rejoicing. And is not that the emblem of christians, overtaken by one of those storms which so often sweep over the ocean of human life, and which cause so many and such fatal wrecks? I will advert to some of these storms. The most violent and awful, and those to which Scripture most frequently alludes, are those which are occasioned by *persecution*. These sometimes rise into a perfect hurricane, resembling the typhoon of eastern seas, or the tornadoes of the West India islands. What a page, blackened with crime, and crimsoned with blood, has the pen of the ecclesiastical historian written. The history of the whole world scarcely furnishes a recital of such horrible sufferings as have been inflicted, first by pagans upon christians, and then by professing christians upon one another, not indeed for crimes, but for opinions. In this career of blood, Popery sustains an unenviable notoriety. It is conjectured that not less than fifty millions of Protestants have been slaughtered by Papists, with every variety of horrible deaths, and every ingenuity of inventive torture. What mind can conceive the amount of agony which must have been endured by this noble army of martyrs? And what, on the part of their persecutors, is the moving principle of their cruelty? Intense selfishness. And what, on the part of their victims, is the principle of their endurance? Christian hope. But for this we had never heard of a martyr; and with this, were the ages of blood to come over again, we should hear of millions more. Ancient pagans, who looked upon the sufferers in the amphitheatre, when offering themselves to be torn to pieces by lions; and more modern observers, who have seen the sublime forti-

tude with which even women have passed through the iron gates of the inquisition never to return, or have yielded themselves up to the tortures of the rack or the stake,—have wondered what principle was strong enough to sustain these victims of intolerance amidst terrors and torments so unutterable. Our subject explains the whole —*the patience of* HOPE. It is not merely faith, but hope. Faith may believe in the reality, the glory, the eternity of a heaven for others, but hope expects it for the individual's own self. The key to the mystery of endurance, the secret of all this invincible courage, which leads on Christ's heroes to the fearful conflict, and makes them more than conquerors on the scaffold and at the stake, is the desire and expectation of the crown of life. "They reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in them." They know "that their light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Yes, it is this single expectation, which not only makes them willing to endure one death, but would bring them to endure, if possible, a thousand. Such and so glorious does heaven appear, that they count not their lives dear to them, so that they might at last wear its honours, and enjoy its felicities.

But let any one imagine, if indeed it be possible to imagine, in *his* circumstances of liberty, ease, and quiet, what a tempest the martyr has to endure. He is a husband and a father; he has a pleasant home, and a happy circle to share and enjoy it with him. While in the midst of all this pure delight, the calm is disturbed by gathering clouds, and portents of a coming storm appear on the horizon; the sky is soon overcast, the

air is murky, and the rumblings of distant thunders are heard; on comes the tempest roaring and pouring out all its fury; the winds and the waves threaten him with immediate destruction, and what is to save him from being swallowed up by apostacy, or dashed upon the rocks of unbelief? His anchor, his anchor. Sorely is he tried. He looks upon the wife of his bosom, and the children of their love; he surveys his quiet home, and his ample fortune. Oh, to be torn from these, to be immersed in a dungeon, to be tortured upon the rack, to be consumed to ashes. How can he endure it? What a tumult of thought is in his soul. How nature pleads. How the man recoils from suffering; how the husband and the father shrink from separation. May he not concede a *little?* May he not for *awhile* conceal, if he do not deny his principles? The conflict is terrible between humanity and christianity, between nature and grace. The vessel is driving upon the rocks; fear is at the helm, and with a weak and trembling hand is guiding the wheel; faith, like a good pilot, springs to the helm, snatches the handle from the feeble grasp of fear, and cries with a voice of strong authority, "Let go the anchor." It is done; it drops into the ocean, lays hold of the ground of promise, and the vessel is safe. The noble-minded believer sends up one piercing cry to heaven for help; that cry is heard; his fainting courage revives, his fears of death are subdued, his love of all that is dear to him on earth sinks below his love to Christ; he recovers from his depression; his dark desponding thoughts leave him, his wavering purpose is fixed; heaven appears to him in all its glories, eternity in all its dread importance, and he exclaims, with the exultation of a hero, "Who shall separate me from the loveof Christ; shall tribulation, or

distress, or persecution? Nay, in all these things I am more than conqueror, through him that hath loved me."

But persecution is not the only storm that arises on the voyage to eternity. There are *the ordinary calamities of human life*, which are indeed neither few nor small; the loss of health, of property, of friends, of domestic comfort. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." There is no exemption for them from the sorrows of earth and time. God's devout children, his most devoted servants, travel home to their Father's house through the vale of tears; there is no other way even for *them*. Yea, "waters of a full cup are often wrung out to them;" they seem often marked out for suffering, and, like the man after God's own heart, exclaim, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Their soul is sometimes so amazed and shaken with the variety, weight, continuance, and peculiarity of their trials, that they are thrown into the greatest perplexity of mind. Distressing and troublous thoughts come into their minds, suggestions of carnal reason, fiery darts of Satan, movements and stirrings of the flesh struggling against the spirit, till the poor soul, like Bunyan's Pilgrim when walking through the valley of the shadow of death, is assailed with all kinds of horrid shapes, and seems ready to perish. Or, to return again to the figure of this chapter, the soul is tempest-tost upon this troubled ocean, and ready to dash on the rocks of unbelief and despair, and to give up all for lost. Now is the time for the anchor, which the believer is at length, after some difficulty, enabled to let go. It is then that the promise, the prospect, and the expectation of eternal glory come with greatest power to his soul. Hope stills and composes those clamorous and

disturbing thoughts, which in affliction are apt, like the tempest birds in a storm, to flap their wings and scream over the shattered vessel. This was David's remedy, "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me. Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." It is a mercy in affliction to be preserved from the delirium of the intellect; and is it not also a mercy to be kept from the delirium of the heart; from the disquieting, distressing, misjudging surmises of unbelief? Now what the ice is to the temples of the former, cooling the blood, lowering the fever, and tranquillising the mind, that is hope to the latter. But this is not all it does, for in the place of these distempered thoughts, so full of bitterness and venom, and inflicting such pain, it fills the soul with the calm of peace and the notes of joy; it helps the christian to smile through his tears, and paints the many coloured bow upon the dark clouds of grief. Hence the beautiful expression of the apostle, "Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God:" and what next? "We glory in tribulation also." No glorying in tribulation if there be no rejoicing in hope. This grace, when earth is a dry and barren desert, without one drop of water, or one blade of verdure, fetches a cooling draught from the crystal river of life, and fruit from the tree that grows on its banks.

"Now all christians, whether hopeful or despondent, are sometimes like the disciples on the Sea of Galilee—driven hither and thither by contrary winds. They toil all the night upon the deep, casting their nets, but taking nothing. Nay, oftentimes their sea is without a Christ walking upon the water, and their ship without a Christ, even asleep. Yet when they desire his coming upon the sea, and cry out to him, they soon see him walking to

them over the waves. When they desire his awakening in the ship, they soon see him rising to rebuke the wind, saying, "Peace, be still," until there is a great calm. God hides his face only to disclose it again; and his hidings are oftentimes as full of mercy as his manifested presence. But whether to their feeble-sighted eyes he is present or absent, they may always know that "he is not far from them at any time." When there are clouds so that they cannot see him, they may look at him through faith, and discern that he is not far off. And as they that go down upon the deep, and are over-mastered by storms in darkness of the night, knowing not on what strange shores they may be thrown, cast anchor and wait for day, so in the midst of trial and temptation, when the storm is fierce and the night is dark, when the lights are quenched and the signals gone, they may cast anchor; and if they wait in faith and hope for the day, it will always dawn. The darkness will always hide itself, and the light appear. There never was a night so long that the day did not overtake it. There never was a morning without its morning star. There never was a day without its sun."

But how does hope keep the soul quiet and steady in these seasons of trial? I answer, by exhibiting the future rest which God has provided for them that love him. There is in that one word "*heaven*," a balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear. The soul reposes on the certainty of heaven. "The traveller, when overtaken by a shower, can stand patiently under a tree," says old Gurnall, "while it rains, because he hopes it is a shower, and sees it clear up in one part of heaven, while it is dark on another. Providence, I am sure, is never so dark and cloudy but hope can see fair weather.

When the christian's affairs are most disconsolate, he may soon meet with a happy change. It is but a moment, said a holy martyr to his fellow-sufferers in the fire, and our pain and sorrow are all over."

Yes, says the sufferer, it is the *certainty* of future glory that fills me with consolation. However bright were the prospect, however glorious the scene, if I could not rely upon it, if I could entertain a doubt or a fear that it were all an illusion, I could have no comfort. But to *know* that there is a heaven to come, and that it is mine, is a consolation to be felt, though not described. Nor is it the certainty only, but the *glory* of that state, its transcendant excellence, that sustains the soul under its trials. How expressive is the language of the apostle, already quoted, "I reckon," says he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us." The value of a calculation depends of course upon its accuracy, and we are quite sure Paul was correct; he had both his own experience and the power of inspiration to keep him from an error. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." There is a glory to come too great for language to describe, or imagination to conceive of, "*an eternal weight of glory.*" What an expression! Never to be understood till it is possessed. For every pang, every sigh, every tear, every moment's suffering, millions of ages of ineffable, inconceivable felicity are to come. Can we wonder that hope of *this* should keep the soul from being overwhelmed with affliction, and shipwrecked by unbelief, despondency, and rebellion against God? And then hope not only rests upon the certainty and rejoices in the glory of heaven, but expects that its present

sufferings will *contribute to its future bliss.* Every tear is the seed of a smile; every groan the discord that prepares for a sweeter harmony; every loss the means of a gain; every disappointment the cause of a fruition. A believer parts with his comforts on earth to receive a full return of happiness from the loss; just as the husbandman parts with his seed corn in sowing time, to receive it back a hundred-fold in his crop at harvest time. The Saviour said of himself, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" And our way to glory lies by the same road. He was *officially* made perfect through suffering, and we must be *personally* made perfect by the same means. Our trials may be as necessary to carry our souls to the haven of eternal repose, as is the wind to carry the ship to her destined port. We are very apt, in our ignorance, to call evil good, and good evil; to imagine God is blessing us with his richest favours, when he causes the sun of prosperity to shine with noon-tide splendour upon us; and that he is cursing us with his heaviest judgments when our condition is overcast with the clouds of adversity; but the contrary may be the case; just as there are times in regard to agriculture, when sunshine is a curse, and clouds, and gloom, and rain a blessing. We need the cloud and rain of adversity, as well as the sunshine of prosperity, and far more. Hope has an eye to see heaven in a cloudy day, and an anchor that can find a firm bottom to lay hold of, under a weight and depth of waters. Here is its safe and blessed anchorage in that one passage, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Afflictions then, are among the all things

which are working for our good; they are like bitter medicines and sharp operations, which put us to present pain for future health; and are like property sunk at present in unproductive employment, to yield a large profit hereafter; or the troubled, stormy ocean, over which we must sail to the haven of rest, for which we are provided, and through which we are carried in safety, by having on board this anchor of hope.

But of what use is an anchor, if it be not a good one. Great care is taken to secure good iron, and to have it well wrought for this purpose. Neglect in this particular would endanger the best ship, having on board the richest cargo. And as it is not every kind of materiel that will answer this purpose of an anchor; so it is not every kind of hope that will preserve the soul from destruction. There is such a thing as a *false* hope, and there is also a *good* one. That hope only is good which rests on the foundation which God has laid in Zion, which is fixed on *the* heaven revealed in Scripture, and purifies the soul from sin and worldliness. Let us look well to the nature of our anchor.

And of what value is the best anchor, if it be not used, and used well? Christians, are yours? Oh, keep up the desire and expectation of eternal glory. With heaven above, and eternity before you; with such events as the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting,—do not allow yourselves to be swallowed up in worldliness, or overwhelmed by afflictions. Hope is a grace which you need to keep in daily exercise. And choose your proper anchorage—the promises of God in his blessed Word. Human speculation, the deductions of reason, the sugges-

tions of philosophy, are but insecure ground; and all ideas of your own personal excellence are but quicksands, which will deceive you,—it is the promise of God in Christ Jesus into which you must cast your anchor, and then come what will in the way of either calm or storm, it will hold, and never drag; and you are safe.

CHAPTER IX.

HOPE CONSIDERED AS A HELMET.

THIS figure of the apostle forms a part of one of the most instructive, impressive, and awful, yet beautiful passages of Holy Writ; I mean Ephes. vi, 12,—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." In this wonderful and rousing paragraph, we are led to contemplate the malignity, the power, and the craft of that mighty and mysterious enemy of God and man,—the devil. There is a terrific grandeur connected with this dreadful personage, and an obscurity never to be cleared up till the light of eternity shall reveal the subject. That he has a true personality, and is not an oriental personification of the principle of evil, must be admitted by all who will place implicit confidence in the Scripture narrative. If Satan be a mere figure of speech, why may not even Christ, and the whole historic facts of the Bible, be a collection of myths and fables? Yes, he *is* a personality, and a being of vastly greater power, perhaps, than the most vigorous imagination ever yet conceived. Our great Bard has done all that poetic genius can accomplish in the way of setting forth the power, the hatred, the rage, and craft of the fallen and diabolized archangel. But it is a subject under which

even his noble intellect bends, and the Satan of the "Paradise Lost" conveys perhaps only a poor and feeble idea of this mighty foe of all holiness and holy beings, compared with the less poetic, yet more awfully mysterious, and super-human, yea, almost super-angelic, personage of the sacred Scriptures. One of the impressive disclosures of eternity will be the full manifestation of the terrible power of this leader of rebellion against God in the universe; this agent by whom moral evil was introduced into our world; this first apostate from holiness, whose influence fascinated so large a portion of the heavenly hosts to their ruin, and formed a confederacy in heaven against its Omnipotent Sovereign. The devil is yet a deep mystery of wickedness and power. One of the chief glories to be witnessed in another world will be Christ's triumph over him; and one of the greatest wonders connected with ourselves will be our own deliverance from his wiles, his malice, and his power.

What a view of this adversary does the passage just quoted give us. The apostle calls upon us to arm ourselves with the whole panoply of God against the "*wiles*" of the devil; intimating that his warfare is conducted with consummate craft, and consists of continued stratagems. His battles are the rush of a sudden ambuscade, when and where they are least expected. He fights not on an open field, but by sudden assault, secret and cunning onslaught, and his aim is to throw his opponents off their guard, and then to surprise them. Sleepless vigilance, self-possession, and promptitude are therefore indispensable to cope with him. These are all the more necessary, as "we wrestle not with flesh and blood." It is not a contest with mere humanity, with man against man, the potsherd striving with the potsherd,

but man against spirit; humanity engaged in the unequal contest with a demonised archangel. It is a contest "against principalities and powers." Beings of high order, and rank, and dominion in the world of spirits; a host marshalled under one great arch-fiend, a chief among the lost. It is not merely the common damned, the vulgar herd of fiends we encounter, but the leader and his staff, of the great rebellion, such as are darkly eminent in rank and dignity; "against the rulers of the darkness of this world:" the spirits that reign and rule amidst the darkness of Paganism, Mahommedanism, Judaism, Popery, and Infidelity; forming the spiritual eclipse which so painfully environs the church, and producing that murky zone which has covered an unbelieving world with such an ominous and lowering shadow. It is from hence, as well as from many other parts of Scripture, very obvious that, in some mysterious ways unknown to us, these fallen spirits have dominion over the realms of ignorance, superstition, heresy, infidelity, and idolatry, and rivet the chains of error upon the enslaved intellect of man. "Against spiritual wickedness in high places;" or as it might, and should be, rendered, "against the spirits of evil," or "wicked spirits in heavenly places." Yes, spirits, spirits again, wicked spirits. Their nature is evil; their commission is evil; their work is evil. Evil, and evil only are they, alike in essence and operation. All their powers, which are vast both for contrivance and execution; all their activities, ceaseless and unwearied, are employed for evil. And all this operation for evil "in heavenly places," not only in the earthly places of the world, but in the heavenly places of the church. They scruple not to invade the kingdom of Christ. Yea, their great aim is to pollute, to divide, to secularize, to

overthrow, the church. See how they have succeeded in the rise, progress, and wide extent and dominion of the Papacy. Nothing gives me such an idea of the subtlety and power of Satan as this dreadful system, which, where it prevails, is Christianity thrown into almost total eclipse by the power and craft of the devil.

Here, then, is the description of our great adversary. To rouse up the christian soldiery, not to dishearten or discourage them, but to excite them to valorous deeds and determined opposition, the apostle gives us an impressive description of our enemy and his power. He marshalls the forces of our adversary before us, and bids us look at our foe. Can we wonder that, in order to prevent us from being appalled and dismayed, he should introduce this all but overwhelming representation of our enemy, with so precious an exhibition of our resources as is contained in that short but all comprehensive admonition, "*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?*" Was it not wise, a master-stroke of sacred policy, before he led us out to conflict with our foe, to take us into "the secret places of the most high," and surround us "with the shadow of the Almighty?" Yes, and even before he conducts us into the armoury, and bids us put on the panoply provided, to lead us up to God, that we may contemplate his omnipotence, and thus fill our souls with courage for the conflict? No matter what armour is provided, how finely tempered, how highly polished, how closely fitted it may be, if there be no courage in the heart; if a man have merely the dress of a soldier with the spirit of a poltroon. Soldiers usually have an invincible courage when they have confidence in the skill and bravery of their leader; and the power of his might, in which *they* are strong, has proved

its vigour in routing the foe which they are summoned to encounter. As "the Captain of salvation," Christ "spoiled principalities and powers," and now calls us to engage in battle with the same enemies, and, in fact, to arm ourselves with the same power, even his own. Satan may be, is, powerful, *more* powerful than we imagine; but God is *all* powerful; and therefore whatever potency we go to conflict with, we go to meet it with Omnipotence. There is an uncommon force in the expression, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." It was as if he had said,—Clothe yourselves with Omnipotence; arm yourselves with Omnipotence; fight with Omnipotence; God lends you his almightiness. Go to the field not only as warriors and heroes, but as God-prompted, God-sustained men.

Now let us enter the armoury of the Lord, and look at the weapons, offensive and defensive, provided for us. You will see that the command is to take "the *whole* armour." We must engage in our conflict with Satan armed from head to foot. No part of the soul must be left uncovered, and it must be the very armour which God has provided. We must not go to philosophy, to reason, to any scheme of defence against our spiritual foes, devised by man. It must be God's arsenal, and not man's that must supply the panoply. And all this, that we may "stand in the evil day;" that is, the day of Satan's terrible assault. It is called the "evil day" because it is an evil thing even to be tempted. It costs us much perplexity and distress to be thus assailed; our fears are excited; our alarms are painful; our apprehensions of defeat sometimes agonizing: and if the temptation prove successful, it is an evil day indeed, as multitudes have found it to be, in their damaged repu-

tation, their disturbed peace, their prostrate honours, their impaired usefulness. Hence the necessity of praying, "Lead us not into temptation," and hence also the propriety of the apostle's exhortation, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."—1st Peter v, 8.

Now consider the armour. "*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.*" This is an allusion to the military belt or sash, which was with the ancients, as it is now with the moderns, an important part of their dress in war, as well as in peace; it served at once for ornament and use; it was designed to keep the other parts of their armour in their place. In the christian profession and the spiritual life, *truthfulness* or sincerity acts the part of the girdle. Next comes "*the breastplate of righteousness.*" The breastplate was a coat of metal, or plates of horn, or folds of leather, or chain armour, to protect the chest and body in front. In our warfare *righteousness*, or holiness of life, answers this purpose. The ancients defended their legs and feet, the latter with sandals, and the former with greaves, or a kind of leggins which came from the footsteps up the front of the leg or shinbone. The christian warrior is to be defended from Satanic assaults "by joy and peace in believing." The joy of the Lord that is unspeakable, and the peace that passeth understanding, will keep him in the midst of danger. "Above all," or "*over*" all, says the apostle, take "*the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.*" This defensive weapon was usually made of light wood, with a rim of brass, and covered with several folds of stout hide; it was held on the left arm, and was intended

to protect the body from the sword or arrows of the assailant. Arrows were sometimes employed which were tipped with a small cavity containing combustible materials, and which, by the power of the atmosphere, or by the percussion when they struck on an object, was set on fire, and thus communicated the flames to ships, tents, or any inflammable substance. To the shield answers *faith*, and by which the fiery darts of Satan are quenched. By these some understand that particular species of temptation which consists of wicked, horrid, blasphemous, and very distressing suggestions and excitements to evil, which in the most unaccountable manner sometimes rise up in the mind, to the great affliction of pious persons. None of us are without these. No association of ideas can account for them; no immediate objects before us lead to them; they come suddenly into the soul, and occasion much agony and astonishment. I have often had to quiet the apprehensions of good people alarmed by these things, by assuring them we are not answerable for what thoughts *come* into the mind, but only for what thoughts we *keep* in the mind. To these we must ever oppose the shield of faith, which will put them all out, as a wall would put out a candle thrown against it.

But is the *head* to be left unprotected? No: for we are to take the "*helmet of hope*." As this is the subject of the present chapter, I shall enlarge on it presently; and in the mean time remark that all the armour hitherto mentioned is defensive. Is the christian then ever to stand upon the defensive? Is he to make no aggression upon his enemies? Is he to remain always at his post, and never engage in the assault? No. He is to "*take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*"

That Word of revealed truth which is written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—by which the Spirit carries on his renewing, comforting, and sanctifying work in the souls of believers—and by which the great Captain of our salvation himself defeated the enemy, when tempted in the wilderness. Nor must we stop here, for to all must be added, that without which all the rest would be ineffectual, the "all prayer and supplication." Without constant, believing, fervent prayer, however he may seem to be protected and armed, the believer cannot stand against his foe. The devil will laugh at the strongest professor, and the best adapted armour, unattended by prayer:

> But Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees.

I now come to consider the *helmet*. I scarcely need say that the helmet is a piece of armour for the defence of the *head*. Now is there any thing in christian hope which renders the helmet a specially appropriate figure to set it forth? Perhaps there is. The head contains the brain, which is the organ of thought. When we distinguish between the intellect and the emotions, we speak of the former as the *head*, the latter as the *heart*. So in the christian life we use precisely the same figures: the head in "the new man" is our *mind*, as our affections are the *heart*. The helmet, in this divine panoply of the soul, is for the defence of the understanding from wrong thinking, either in the way of sin, worldliness, or error. How much of true godliness lies in a right condition of the christian intellect. It is but a part of religion that consists in action. The greater portion of man's moral history lies in the soul, out of sight of our fellow-

creatures, but not out of sight of God. I much fear this is not sufficiently understood or remembered. Yet it is a most momentous idea. Our conduct and words form a very small part of our moral selves. Let any one imagine how much is ever going on in the secret recesses of the soul: what multitudes of thoughts are ever crowding the intellect, and what multitudes of feelings the heart; and the greater portion of them partaking of a moral character. Let it be considered how much of evil a wicked man perpetrates in desires, wishes, intentions, volitions, devices, and imaginations; how much more indeed than he has the opportunity or the courage to bring out into action. Even the christian must be sensible of this fact, also, that more evil is in the heart than is reduced to practice. Yes, and so of the opposite. How much of holy desire, volition, purpose, plan, is ever going on within the bosom of a child of God, which no eye but that of his Father sees. Hence the truth of the assertion, that it is but a portion of our moral history which is seen in the outward character, and the indispensable necessity of our looking well to the state of the heart. Let us take good care of the heart, and the heart will take care of the life. We must watch well our *thoughts*, for holy thinking gives rise to holy feeling, and ends in holy action. It is much the same with sin, for the apostle says, "When lust (or evil desire) hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—James i. 15. This is the order of exercise in all rational creatures—the thought—the feeling—the volition—the action. The thought is the bud, of which the feeling is the blossom, the will the setting, and the action the fruit. All wrong doing begins in wrong thinking; and all right doing in right

thinking. Hence it is of infinite importance for the christian to be attentive, seriously, devoutly, anxiously attentive, not only to the state of the heart, but the state of the head. This was what Solomon meant where he says: "Keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Keep a strict watch over your thoughts and inclinations. The mind is always consciously busy in its waking hours. We can no more suspend the power and action of our thinking principle, than we can suspend the action of our heart, or lungs. Nor can we prevent the entrance of evil thoughts into our mind; these, like bad company, will obtrude themselves upon us, but it is at our option to retain or expel them. They will light down, like birds of prey, even upon our sacrifices of devotion, but we can fray them away if we please, or suffer them to pollute and consume the offering. Our thoughts are in their rise involuntary, the soul is passive in their reception, but active in its treatment of them when they have come. Hence the control of the thoughts is one of the most necessary exercises of self-government, one of the most important parts of personal piety. There must not only be the government of the senses, or a strict watch over the exercise of these upon external objects, though this is both necessary and important, for the senses are the doors of the soul,—but a most vigilant attention to what is passing within.

There are various classes of evil thoughts, against which we must be upon our guard as pernicious. There are *idle* thoughts, or the perpetual exercise of the intellect about the merest trifles, matters that have not the weight of a feather or the value of a grain of sand. It is a pitiable sight to behold an intellect that can contemplate

such sublime subjects as God, Christ, salvation, heaven, eternity, wasting its energies—no, not its *energies*, for it has none—but frittering away its feeble powers on absolute littlenesses, on almost nonenties; in short, evaporating the powers of a man in the exercises of a child. Many carry their intellects as a little child does a watch, ignorant alike of its construction and its uses. It would be instructive and somewhat humiliating for them, and indeed for us all, sometimes to ask, at the close of a day, "What have I been thinking about to-day? What matters have engaged my attention and employed my intellect?" This folly of idle thoughts is a double waste—of intellect and of time. Now christian hope will be a defence against this, by giving us something great to think about, and by prompting us to think about it. Even christians need to be admonished on this head; their renewed and sanctified intellects are too full of little matters: even they, since they became men, have not put away all childish things. With their immortal hopes, they are too puerile, and taken up with the toys of the children of the world, when they should be engaged with the subjects that occupy the attention of archangels.

Then there are *worldly* thoughts, I mean there are minds thinking about nothing else, wholly and entirely engrossed in things of the world. There are persons, of whom it can be most truly and emphatically said, "*They mind earthly things?*" Their intellect is a kind of shop, or market, or exchange, or manufactory, where nothing but crowds of buyers and sellers; nothing but bargain and sale; nothing but calculations of profit and loss; nothing but the buzz and hum of trade and commerce, are ever heard. Of course there must be *much* of this; but it is a sad thing where there is nothing else; and where that

soul, which was intended to be a temple for God, is nothing better than a house of merchandise. Christian hope, if in vigorous exercise, while it would not unfit a man for business, nor paralyse his industry, nor extinguish his desire of success, would still raise him above the world, and give him something else to think about. It is this that is wanted in greater power among professing christians. The spirit of the world is coming, *is* come, into the church. Business, business, business: profit, profit, profit: elegance, entertainment, and luxurious gratification, are occupying, far more than they ought to do, the minds of professing christians. Why? Because their hope of heaven is low. Their helmet is laid aside. The world is aiming a blow at the head, and professors are not sufficiently protected against it. It is only the desire and expectation of heaven that can be a sufficient defence against the influences and encroachments of earth. We do not let "the glory that excelleth" come in, as we should do, upon the glory of this lower world.

How apt are many to harbour *proud* thoughts. Pride seems natural to humanity, and it is strange and even ridiculous to see what really insignificant and almost contemptible matters will give occasion for its exercise. On what trifles will some persons found a distinction and claims to superiority, when comparing themselves with their fellow-creatures. Could we search the heart as God can, and does, how much of this self-exaltation, valuation, and admiration should we see ever going on. Pride has its place and its operation, not only in the world, but in the church. It is not only intellect, and wealth, and rank, and beauty, that give occasion for it, but piety, experience, liberality, activity, success. The more real

excellence there is, the greater the danger of falling into this sin. Spiritual pride is, of all kinds, the most hateful and offensive both to God and man. And what christian is there, who, if he be attentive to his own thoughts, does not know that he has often detected himself standing before the glass, and admiring the beauty of his character and conduct? Against this, hope is one of the best preservatives. Who can look down at the foundation, and recollect that he owes all to grace, and rests entirely upon the atonement and merit of Christ for his eternal salvation; and then look up and consider the perfection of heaven, which brings out so strongly his own *im*perfection, and not feel all occasion for pride taken away? Who does not know, by experience, that he is never so low, so mean, so unworthy in his own eyes, as when he looks up into heaven, and contemplates not only the excellence of the spirits of just men made perfect; not only the spotless innocence of angels; but the infinite, immaculate purity of the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty? Humility grows most rapidly and most healthily by heavenly-mindedness. It was this that humbled the prophet Isaiah, and made him cry out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." It was this that took all high thoughts from the patriarch Job: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Yes, and the nearer we come, by devout contemplation and lively hope, to the heavenly world, the more shall we enter into those beautiful words of Watts—

> The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
> The humbler I shall lie:
> Thus while I sink, my joys shall rise
> Unmeasurably high.

In addition to these there are *angry, vengeful, malicious* thoughts: alas, alas, how many of these are to be found in the minds of us all; how difficult is it under provocation, and injury, and insult, to exercise the charity "that suffereth long, and is kind." How difficult to keep out implacable, revengeful, malicious thoughts; not to brood over the offence with inflamed imaginations and exaggerating ideas. What pictures of the offender we draw, how hideous a monster we are apt to make him; how we represent him as entirely destitute of all claims to charity or even forgiveness. We thus tempt our feelings by our thoughts; our feelings prompt our words; and our words end in actions that return evil for evil. Genuine love under injury is the most rare, because the most difficult of all duties; and yet it is made by the apostle indispensable to all true religion: it *is* in fact true religion itself. How shall we defend our head against the blows of our great enemy in endeavouring to slay us, by tempting us to malice, wrath, and all uncharitableness? How? By putting on our helmet, which is the hope of salvation; the ardent desire and confident expectation of heaven is one of our most secure defences against malicious and revengeful thoughts. What is heaven? A region of holy love, perfect love, eternal love; no malice shall ever enter there: the unruffled serenity of a bosom which is a stranger to ill-will, shall reign there; not a thought contrary to the most entire and universal benevolence shall ever enter the mind of a single inhabitant of that happy world. Now the very hope of such a heaven tends to change the mind into the likeness of itself; the contemplation of that state brings loving, holy thoughts into the mind, and thus expels others of a contrary nature. Bring me a passionate, wrathful, implacable, and malevolent professor,

thinking of the evil his brother has done to him, and meditating what evil he will in return do to him, and I will ask him, "Do you hope for heaven? Do you believe you can have a title to heaven if your sins are not forgiven? Can your sins be forgiven if you do not forgive those that injure you? Can you go to heaven without a meetness? Is not meetness holy love? Will not holy love lead you to forgive? Do you desire this meetness? Can you possess it if you harbour all kinds of unforgiving thoughts? Would you overcome this malevolent temper?" Then I say, keep up your christian hope. Be often at the gates of heaven. Meditate on its ineffable glories. Consider they are all glories of love. I tell you one of the best cures of an unforgiving mind, is the intelligent, scriptural hope of heaven.

Many have to complain of *impure, licentious* thoughts; they come unbidden into the mind; no object appealing to the senses excites them, and to the pure in heart they are an offence and a grief: of course all that would excite them should be avoided, such as books, pictures, natural objects, and conversation. We must watch the senses, and make a covenant with our eyes not to look on what would suggest impure thoughts. He that carries gunpowder about his person should not venture near the fire; and he that would not catch the plague, should not come in contact with a person infected with it. As I have lately said, we are not answerable for thoughts that come unbidden into the mind; but we are for such as we invite, and we *do* invite them when we hold familiar intercourse with subjects that necessarily produce them. In this case, whether the thoughts are brought in, or come in, hope is our defence. Before the rays of the excellent glory which fall upon the soul in full contemplation of heaven, these

unhallowed fires will be extinguished. When these obscene ideas come into the mind, turn it heavenward; drive back the foul current by a stronger and a purer one.

I must not omit *hard thoughts of God* regarding the dispensations of his providence. Sometimes these are produced by heavy, peculiar, and long continued afflictions. In those night seasons of the christian life, when the outer darkness deepens into an inner gloom of the mind still more dark, what fearful questionings, what awful scepticism, what sullen moodiness of spirit, what rebellious ideas, what atheistic reasonings—haunt the soul. Satan sees it in this sad perplexity and rushes in with his fiery assault. It is now the palpable obscure, the darkness that may be felt, the very valley of the shadow of death. The soul is in great danger of absolute despair, or overwhelming scepticism. What shall preserve it in such a case? Only turning from the mysteries of providence to the scheme of saving grace. Only the hope of that world where what is now dark will be illumined, and what is mystery will become revelation; only the expectation of the end, where all that now puzzles and perplexes us, will astonish and delight us; only the contemplation of that ocean of light, love, and joy, into which these dark and winding streams of Providence will discharge themselves, and help to swell that boundless, stormless sea,

> Where not a wave of trouble rolls,
> Across the peaceful breast.

And are there not thoughts of *error* against which a defence is necessary? What better defence can we find than this helmet, which is the hope of salvation? Never was there an age in which the christian more needed to

be completely armed against the attacks of heresy, than the present. An undisguised infidelity which is assiduously labouring to associate even science with itself; an atheistic philosophy which is seizing our periodical press, and insinuating itself into our general literature; and what is still more dangerous, because not so openly, nor so intentionally hostile to christianity, systems of doctrine, which while professing to do homage to christianity, and to propound its leading truths, obscure the objects of our faith, and undermine the foundation of our hope:—these, all these perils thrown in our way, and rendered still more perilous by the genius and the eloquence by which they are set forth and recommended, are filling the minds of many professors of religion, and especially the younger ones, with thoughts that endanger their stedfastness in the faith. The winds of false doctrine are blowing from every quarter; and even within the pale of what we consider and call evangelical religion, a leaven of error is unquestionably at work, and diffusing itself, the sad results of which, at no very distant day, will be unquestionably seen. A gradual but unintentional preparation for this is to my eye clearly discernible in those apologies which we are continually hearing or reading from men generally, and, upon the whole, orthodox, on behalf of those who, if not off the foundation, are obviously out of the perpendicular of revealed truth. I confess to a considerable jealousy of much that is said and done in the circle of what is still called evangelism. Some, we are told, do not view divine truth from the same stand point; do not speak of it in precisely the same language as others, and yet hold the same doctrines in substance; and we must therefore have a broad and ample charity to cover over these differences. Provided

the great fundamental truths of the mediatorial scheme of the gospel *are really* retained, truths which are "the family jewels of God's redeemed family, the heir-loom to be handed down from generation to generation, there can be no heresy in having them re-set in language and style of composition suited to the taste of the age." I most willingly concede this; yet I am not easy under the excessive demand which is made for a change of the outward form of truth; this is to me somewhat portentous. It seems a dangerous opiate that will close the watchful eye with which the sacred deposit of divine truth ought ever to be watched. In this age we are in no danger of a narrow-minded bigotry, a tyranny of authority, an obstinate attachment to old forms, a childish veneration for hoary antiquity, or a propensity to forge shackles for liberty and independence of thought; *our* danger lies in the opposite extreme, of a liberty that runs into licentiousness; a worship of novelty; a contempt for collective wisdom and the accumulations of experience; a rejection of all guidance but our own individual experience; and a disposition, amidst modern illumination, to treat as worthless and mere *ignes fatui*, all the great lights of bygone ages. That sound orthodoxy, both in the established church and among the dissenting bodies, is somewhat in danger, at least for a season, I have no more doubt than that I am recording my opinion on this page.

The best defence we can set up against this tendency is, to keep up the vigour of spiritual life in our churches, of which the christian hope is one of the most essential and healthful exercises. Fundamental error is not likely to gain entrance and exercise in a heavenly mind; and heavenliness implies hope. While the soul is maintaining a solemn, devout, and practical regard to the celestial

state, it keeps its hold on the truth as it is in Jesus. No one who is looking for eternal life will, or can, be indifferent to the basis on which such an expectation rests. He will take heed that he is not raising a Babel on a quicksand. We have already shown that Christ in his atoning work is the only foundation of a good hope. As long, therefore, as there is an earnest desire and confident expectation of eternal happiness, there will be no disposition to give up those great truths on which the soul builds her immortal hopes. It is only when she has become earthly in her habitual state, only when she has lost her high and holy aspiration towards the heavenly kingdom, that she can become reconciled to error, and in such a state she can be *very soon* reconciled to it. To a carnal, earthly mind there is much in errors of various kinds to recommend them. Error and earthliness are congenial states of mind. Hence we see that those communities which have given up the fundamental doctrines of the gospel are distinguished for their worldliness. Let our churches become worldly, and the same effect will soon be visible, in their indifference to doctrinal truth.

If this be true, and it cannot be doubted, much less denied, it shows us the importance of our ministers being not only earnest for the preservation of sound doctrine, but, as a means of preserving it, equally earnest for maintaining spiritual life. Lifeless orthodoxy is but very little better than lifeless heterodoxy; they are both but corpses, only one is less hideous and less offensive than the other. It is well enough to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," but it is no less well to contend as earnestly for the blessed hope of the redeemed church. Let us all consider we are safe from

error only so far as we find, feel, and exhibit a living power in the truth we hold.

Let us then look well to our helmet, and never venture into the field without it; and let us take heed that it be of the right kind, made of the right material, and able to resist the assaults of the foe. A good hope through grace; a hope founded exclusively on Christ, which looks for an eternity of holiness, as that which can alone yield an eternity of happiness; this, and this only, constitutes the helmet that will resist the blows of Satan, aimed at the head of the christian.

The facts of ecclesiastical history will serve as proof and illustration of all that has been said in this chapter. When spiritual life has been lost, creeds, confessions, and articles of faith have been found an insufficient breakwater against the waves of error, and a feeble defence of sound orthodoxy. To this we ascribe the prevalence of Rationalism in Germany, and other parts of the Continent, where the formularies of Luther and Calvin still continued to be the established standard of truth long after their spiritual influence was gone. Both the Scottish and English establishments furnish similar evidence, and so also does the history of Nonconformity. This might be illustrated also in the case of individual ministers. I know one who is still living, who, after being educated at one of our colleges, embraced Unitarianism, and for a time preached its doctrines; he was, however, at length brought back to his former views. In an interview I had with him, I asked him if he could trace his doctrinal lapse to any particular cause? He said, "Yes: I lost the power of vital godliness, and then theological orthodox opinions became a matter of indifference to me, and I abandoned them for others more flattering to the pride of intellect."

These, if not his exact words, contain the substance of what he said: and this one fact alone shews the vast importance of keeping up the true spiritual life. Truth in the intellect, and life in the heart, act and re-act upon each other, just as the healthy state of the brain and the right action of the heart in the human body influence each other. We must have sound doctrine to originate, sustain, and quicken spiritual life; and we must have spiritual life to strengthen our hold upon sound doctrine.

CHAPTER X.

VARIOUS DESCRIPTIONS OF HOPE NOT INCLUDED, OR ONLY ALLUDED TO, IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS.

A GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE.

So the apostle calls it, 2 Thes. ii. 16; and connects with it the enjoyment of "everlasting consolation." There is a richness of expression in these few words, to which no exposition or paraphrase can do justice. Every view we can take of the christian hope, entitles it to this description. It is good, *absolutely*. Good in its foundation—which is Christ; good in its object—which is heaven; good in its influence—which is holiness; good in its power to support and comfort under all the trials of life; good for all persons from the prince to the peasant; good for all occasions, for prosperity and adversity; good through all the journey of life, and amidst all the agonies of death. Whoever tried it, and found it otherwise than good? Was this adjective ever more truly or more appropriately applied to any object? Will not the believer who entertains it, and feels its blessed influence, joyfully exclaim, "Yes, if there be any thing good on earth, any thing in me, any thing in religion,—it is this. Whatever good things I have,—this is best. I would, if my heart do not deceive me, part with all, rather than this; and if, on the deprivation of

property, friends, health, I were asked what I had left, I would answer from the midst of surrounding evils, 'A good hope through grace,' and feel that, having nothing else but this, I should account myself possessing all things." What multitudes have experienced all this, and found that hope has stood by them, when every thing else had fled. As the sun converts clouds to a glorious drapery, painting them with gorgeous hues, and arraying the whole horizon with its magnificent costumes,—so a believing and radiant heart lets forth its hope upon its sorrows, and all the blackness flies off, and troubles, that seemed likely to extinguish it, serve only as a theatre to display its glory. Is not this good?

But the christian's hope is good *comparatively*. How insignificant, little, and mean, are the objects of worldly desire and expectation. What are wealth, rank, fame, pleasure, compared with the glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, which the believer looks for beyond the grave? They are all of the earth, earthly,—this is heavenly; they are human—this divine; they are transient—this everlasting; they are unsatisfying, leaving the soul a void unfilled—this replenishing its vast capacity; they are fleeting, shadowy, and precarious—this absolutely certain; they are the toys of children, compared with the occupations of a Newton, when handling his telescope, surveying the heavens, ascertaining and contemplating the stars, with his bosom swelling with the hope of discoveries that will instruct the world and immortalize himself; they leave the poor, craving soul, exclaiming, "Who will show us any good?"—this compels him, with rapture, to exclaim, "I have found it, I have found it."

Compare this hope with that of the heathen, and see

how good it is. How dim and uncertain were the views of the wisest and best of these, as set forth in the doubting expectations of Cicero, the loftiest speculations of Plato, and the dying prospects of Socrates. Were these sages of Greece, these lights of the ancient world, to revisit our earth with no more knowledge than they carried away with them, they might thankfully sit at the feet of a heaven-taught Sunday-school girl, and from her lips learn lessons of immortality which their discoveries never enabled them to reach. As a proof of this, I refer to their sayings. The hope of immortality is styled by Cicero, "A conjecture or surmise of future ages." Seneca says—"It is that which our wise men do promise, but do not prove." Socrates, at his death, said,—"I hope to go hence to good men, but of that I am not very confident; nor doth it become any wise man to be positive that so it will be. I must now die, and you shall live; but which of us is in the better state, God only knows." Pliny says,—"Neither soul nor body has any more sense after death than before it was born." Aristotle held "that death was terrible, as putting an end to all things." Plutarch called it "The fabulous hope of immortality." How evident is it from the experience and testimony of such men, that reason is inadequate to the discovery of a future state; and that nothing could make this certain to man, except a revelation from God. The trial never could have been made with greater advantages than by the philosophers of Greece and Rome: and these confessed that they could arrive at no certainty on the subject. In this state of things the gospel comes with its glorious discoveries, abolishes death, *i. e.*, renders its reign but transient; and establishes the fact, not only of

the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the body; thus solving the great and awful problem of man's nature and destiny, and bringing in everlasting consolation, and a good hope through grace.

Mohammedanism speaks of its Paradise,—but how grovelling, how sensual, how unworthy the soul of man. The false prophet accommodates his heaven to the animal and lowest passions of our nature, and holds out to the faithful little more or better than the harem of an Eastern despot. He carries his sensual system into the celestial state, and peoples his eternal world with a race of voluptuaries. What a contrast is here presented to the christian Paradise, where flesh and blood are excluded with all their grosser appetites and propensities; and not only is the soul perfect in purity, but even the body is too spiritual for the sensual passions of the flesh.

Little better is the Elysium of the classic nations of Greece and Rome, or rather of their poets, and it was only poetry. If we consult Homer, Virgil, Pindar, and others, these rise no higher than converse with Gods which are themselves stained with crime, and this intercourse maintained amidst green bowers, gliding streams, murmuring springs, verdant meadows, and warbling of birds; others add mirth and sensual delight. True it is the philosophers turned away in partial disgust from these low views, yet they had nothing better to substitute, which could be relied upon with certainty. Now and then a dim ray of light seemed to pierce the clouds of mortality, and point to a region beyond, but while the eye of reason looked at it, it vanished like a meteor, and left the benighted, bewildered philosopher in all his doubt and darkness. I need not further enlarge upon this, than to contrast Cicero's sceptical apostrophe to the coming

day of transition from earth to heaven, with Paul's triumphant confidence, where he says,—"*We know* that if the earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There, was Paganism, straining her exploring eye over the dark abyss of the grave, with feeble fluttering hope, and strong prevailing fear, holding up her dark lantern, but gaining no discovery; uttering her inquiring voice, but receiving no response: all was dark and silent to her. Here, is Christianity gazing with steady faith, living hope, and enraptured view, amidst the broad day-light of revelation, on those sweet fields beyond the swelling flood which stand dressed with living green, and adorned with the amaranthine flowers of the celestial Paradise. Oh, precious gospel, which has thus laid open to us not only the glory, but the certainty of a future state of bliss.

It is hardly worth while to bring into the comparison those monstrous, fantastic, and grovelling representations of the future state which are the products of modern Paganism,—the transmigration of souls of the Eastern world from body to body, through millions of ages, till they are at last absorbed in the gods; or the hunting grounds and pleasures of the chase, which form the future of savage tribes. Who can contemplate these varied, but grovelling and uncertain expectations, held by the ancient and modern heathens, and not see, comparing them with the christian faith, the truth and force of the apostle's description, when he calls it a *good* hope?

Compare it with the hope of the Jew. How scanty were the revelations of a future state under the Old Testament. How seldom did the sun of the celestial world seem to break through the clouds and shadows of the Levitical

economy, and throw its lustre on the path of even the pious Israelite. In what gloom and deep dejection did he approach the sepulchre. Where in all the law, the psalms, and prophets, do we find those triumphant anticipations of eternal glory, which are so frequent in the writings of holy Paul? Where do we see the ancient believer looking up into heaven with the exulting expectation that he shall soon be there with God and his saints? How rarely did David strike his harp or tune his voice in praise of the heaven to come. How seldom did even the evangelical prophet Isaiah rise high on the wing of prophecy till he bathed his spirit in the flood of the excellent glory, and then descended to tell the visions he had seen. One chapter, I might almost say one verse, of the New Testament, tells us more of the celestial world, as to the reality and nature of its felicities, than all the pages of the Old. So true are the apostle's words already quoted,—"He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Is it not then *a good hope* that *christians* have? And then, just for a moment, dwell on its source, as expressed in this verse, "a good hope *through grace.*" Any hope, the expectation of the smallest favour, even the shortening of the term, or lightening the weight of punishment, would be favour; annihilation would be mercy, for sinners who deserved to be plunged in eternal despair; just as any situation on earth might be esteemed a favour for a man who had been condemned to die, and deserved it. It had been grace to be merely exempted from the bitter pains of eternal death, though our eternal destiny had been to dwell in some world far from God's presence, and with only some few comforts to make existence tolerable. It would have been a display of grace, rich grace, to bestow

upon us all the glories of Paradise for ten thousand ages, and then to extinguish our existence for ever. Had we never heard of *eternal* life, and had this been presented to us as the object of christian desire and expectation, we should have considered it as a manifestation of abounding favour. But for sinners that had deserved hell to have such a hope as ours, the hope of everlasting life, with all that can make existence a blessing; to have a hope founded on the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God; to be brought by the new creating power of God into the possession of *this* hope; is it not a display of grace which will fill the universe with astonishment, and our eternity with wonder and with praise?

A LIVELY HOPE.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."—1 Peter i, 3.

In this very comprehensive and beautiful passage, the apostle Peter, like his brother Paul in the commencement of his epistle to the Ephesians, introduces his subject by bursting abruptly into a hymn of thanksgiving. His heart was full to overflowing of wonder, gratitude, and love, and he could not content himself with a mere cold formal statement of the marvellous grace of God. He first ascends to the source of the blessings he was about to enumerate, and finds it only in the abundant mercy of God. There is no attribute of God on which as sinners we so much depend as upon mercy; and there is no one therefore about which so much is said in Scripture as this. Mercy is the spring and fountain head of

the blessings here enumerated, our regeneration and adoption into the family of God; our heavenly inheritance, and our conservation to the vast and eternal possession. It is the lively *hope*, however, that is the subject of our present remarks. To this we are "begotten," *i.e.*, we are first made children, and then, as such, being endowed with an eternal inheritance, we, as children, being entitled to it, through the work of Christ, hope for it. And to this we are begotten "by the resurrection of Christ." In an earlier part of this work I have shewn that hope must be preceded by faith, and is founded upon it. We must first believe that there is a heaven, and that it is obtainable by us, or we cannot hope for it; and if we do believe, we must of necessity hope. Whatever therefore produces faith, and strengthens it, must beget hope. The resurrection of Christ is the sum and substance of all the evidence of the divinity of his mission, of the truth of his doctrines, and of course of the gospel of our salvation. It is a cloud of witnesses in itself, and therefore believing this great fact, we are, through the grace of God, brought to hope. But more than this, the resurrection of Christ is the proof and pledge of ours. Believing in his resurrection, we believe our own; for he rose not as a private individual, but as our representative. Thus our faith is confirmed, established, supported by his resurrection, and we are begotten to a lively hope.

But I intend now to dwell on this characteristic of our hope, as lively, or, as it signifies, "a *living*" one. True personal religion is the opposite of any unregenerate state, which is a state of spiritual death; the unconverted sinner is "*dead* in trespasses and sins." Hence religion is spiritual *life*. It is a living, moving, acting principle

in man's soul. He has been quickened from a death of sin to a life of holiness. His religious exercises are not the motions of an automaton, but the self-moved actions of a living being. His soul is alive to God, to Christ, to holiness, to heaven. Now just as in the tree each branch, and leaf, and fruit, lives by the principle of vegetable life in the root; and as in the body, the principle of animal life diffuses its influence into each and all the members and organs; as the foot moves, the hand works, the eye sees, and the tongue speaks by the principle of animal life; so, as regards religion, all its graces act from the spiritual life in the soul; faith is a living faith, hope is a living hope, love is a living love. The apostle, it is true, speaks of a dead faith, but this indeed is no faith at all; so we may speak of a dead hope, which is none at all. If there be in reality a hope, it must be a living one. Nearly all the people in christian lands profess to have hope, but in multitudes of cases it is a dead one; it breathes not, moves not, speaks not; it neither makes them holy nor happy; it neither animates to duty, restrains from sin, nor supports under suffering. It is a mere profession. Is it not much to be feared that this is all that many professors of religion, many members of our churches, have in this day? I would not be uncharitable, but I must express my apprehensions, fearful as they are, that large numbers in this day of easy profession, have nothing but a dead faith and a dead hope. Their profession, instead of being the coat of a living man, is the shroud of a dead one. Judging from their conduct, we must conclude that they have neither desire nor expectation of eternal life. Professor, let me ask you what does your hope do for you? Consider this is not a desire fixed on a trifle, which must be a trifling desire,

exciting no emotion, producing no action, awakening no anxiety. This is desire of *salvation*, of eternal life, of immortal glory. Can such an expectation, if it really exist, lie dormant in the soul, an ineffective, inoperative thing, producing no joy, no anxiety, no activity? Impossible. Let every one, therefore, solemnly ask himself this simple question,—What does my anticipation of heaven do for me? Is it alive in me? Does it move? Does it act? Does it stimulate me to duty, restrain me from sin, comfort me in trouble? Are my character and conduct in any degree those of a man who has fixed his eye, his heart, his expectation, on eternal life? If not, my hope is a dead one,—a name and a delusion.

In opposition to this, the hope of a really converted man is a *living* one. The word signifies a vigorous, active, spirit-stirring principle, as opposed to the cold, faint belief of Heathenism, nay, even of Judaism. It is an earnest desire and confident expectation of everlasting life. Such a desire and expectation as employs the thoughts and kindles the affections. It acts on the soul, as regards spiritual and eternal objects, as earthly desires and expectations do towards their objects. If a man be looking forward with confident expectation of some great earthly good, some cherished object, which is to influence all his future life, it is uppermost in his mind, it engages his heart, it employs his tongue, it stimulates his activity. If he receive some lesser good, "Oh," he says, "but I have something far greater to come." If he has sustained a loss, he replies, "I shall soon have ample compensation for this." If he is in trouble, he cheers his mind with the anticipation of the expected good. If solicited to engage in any project which would divert his mind from this, he exclaims, "No. I cannot allow any

thing to interfere with my one great object." This is a living hope. And so is it with the man who has really set his heart upon salvation and eternal life.

I am ready to admit that it is with spiritual life as it is with natural, it may exist in various degrees. There may be vitality, where there is not vivacity. There may be life so feeble as scarcely to be perceived or felt, and there may be vitality in such vigour as to give rise to the expression, "He is full of life." In reference to the two terms, "living" and "lively," a hope may, in a very modified sense, be a *living* one, yet not a *lively* one; and on that account I am almost ready to prefer the adverb of our translators to the proposed substitute. The original comprehends both. If there are some professors whose graces, and this among the rest, are not living, in any sense, I am sure there are many whose state of mind is not lively. They have desires, but how lukewarm; and expectations, but how uncertain and fluttering. They do not give up the idea of their being christians, and reaching heaven at last; but amidst what doubts and fears these expectations are indulged. In duty, how backward; in spirit, how worldly; in trouble, how disconsolate. How deficient in spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. O, ye half-hearted, worldly-minded, lukewarm professors, I call upon you "to strengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die." You have only that measure of life which is next akin to death, and is in peril of becoming such.

Believers, be contented with nothing short of a lively as well as living expectation, which shall be an unfailing source of both consolation and holiness; which lifts up your head, and keeps it up, when passing through the rivers of affliction; which remains, when every thing

else is gone; which opens a fountain amidst broken cisterns; which lives in death, and exhibits heaven to the eye in the dark valley; and which judgment and eternity do not destroy, but only consummate. Let the full tide of spiritual life be poured into this, as one of the many channels through which its holy stream is to flow.

A PATIENT HOPE.

"*Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*"—1 Thes. i. 3. It is somewhat striking, and very interesting, to observe the various combinations of christian graces which are presented to us in many places by the sacred writers, like so many different precious stones in a bracelet, or so many flowers in a bouquet, or stars in a constellation. Each lending its separate beauty to form a resplendent whole. How impressive is that rich chain in 2 Peter i. 5; or Gal. v. 22; or 1 Cor. xiii. 13. The passage now under consideration differs from the last of those referred to, in the order in which the graces stand. Here, it is faith, love, hope: there, hope is put second: and a supplemental and appropriate operation is here ascribed to each, which is left out in 1 Cor. xiii. 13. The same order as here is set down also in 1 Thes. v. 8. This latter collocation, in the passage now under consideration, is in more exact accordance with the nature and relations of the christian's life: hope is mentioned last, because it is the nearest connecting link between this world and that which is to come. These three virtues are each represented, as we have said, by an epithet which is intended to exhibit them in their

practical exercise. We have "the *work* of faith." This does not mean that faith is God's work in the soul. This is true; but it is not the truth here. It must be explained by the analogy of the other two virtues; and as the epithet in connection with them represents their practical operation, so it must be here. "The work of faith," must mean a working faith. Its best explanation will be found in the second chapter of the epistle of James. In some other places, as 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7, it is represented as a *fighting* virtue, just as here it is a *working* one; both implying great exertion. Every representation of this holy principle makes it an active one. Faith cannot be an idle, passive, inoperative assent, but a vigorous and impulsive conviction. It is not the state of mind which, in the exact sciences, perceiving the evidence, reposes upon it, without farther desire or effort; but that of a man, who, believing a report concerning some benefit he may obtain, rouses himself to put forth every effort to secure it. "Shew me thy faith without thy works," exclaims the true believer, "and I will shew thee my faith by my works." May I illustrate it by a reference to the steam engine? Faith is the steam power in the cylinder, which sets all the machinery in motion.

"The *labour* of love" explains itself. Faith works by love; and love works in all those various ways, set forth with such exquisite beauty and elegance in Paul's personification of charity. The apostle has used a strong term, in application to love, by calling it the "*labour*" of love. Love stirs up the whole soul to energetic, vigorous, and persevering action. This operation of love is in substance the same as that which is ascribed to faith, only here it is intensified by a still stronger term; the

word "labour" being a more emphatic one than "work." Love is the most powerful impulse to vigorous action that the soul knows. What will not the mother do for her child? The wife for her husband? The lover for the object of his affection? How beautifully the expression, "labour of love," chimes in with all our instincts and our experience. Oh! what an illustration of this have we in the incarnation, life, sufferings, and death of our Lord. There was a labour of love which is a pattern for us, and which will fill the universe with wonder and delight.

But it is "the *patience* of hope," to which this section is principally devoted. And is there any characteristic of this grace more obvious than patience? When our hearts are strongly set upon an object, is there any effort too great to make for its possession?—any length of time too long to wait?—any disappointment too severe to endure, as long as one ray of hope remain unextinguished? How often have we been struck with this, in observing the conduct of our fellow-creatures, in reference to some worldly object on which their hearts were entirely set. We have seen them working, waiting, and watching, led on by some glimmering light, which to every eye but their own was a meteoric delusion; never relaxing their efforts, nor intermitting their expectations, long after all around them saw that the object they pursued must for ever elude their grasp. A very striking illustration of this was seen in the conduct of the crew of the ill-fated ship, the Central America, and which a writer in a Transatlantic journal has employed in illustration of the patience of *christian* hope:—"For thirty-six hours they lived on hope. On Friday noon the leak was made known, and all hands began to bale out the engine-

room. They go to work calmly and systematically, hoping to conquer the water *there*, and thus to regain their steam-power. Till eight o'clock that evening they worked steadily at this one point; regained their steam only to lose it finally. Still all night long the gangs of weary men worked with good spirits, in the hope that the morning would bring relief. And when toward morning their strength began to fail, and the water to increase in the hold, hope was renewed by a lull of the gale, and the assurance of an experienced captain that the ship would hold out. 'Every passenger remained cool, and seemed to forget his danger in the united efforts to save the vessel. There was no weeping or exhibition of despair.' All Saturday morning they keep on baleing, though the storm increases, and the vessel fills. At noon the clouds begin to break; hope revives, and 'all work like giants.' Two hours later a sail appears; then hope bursts into joy. Another vessel heaves in sight; and though night is coming on, the hope of help sustains all hearts. With the calmness and patience that hope alone can impart, they first provide for the weak and the helpless, and though the daylight wanes, they still hope for the returning boats till the fatal lurch of the sinking ship leaves five hundred men upon the waves. Yet even then hope does not desert them. Through the darkness of the night, the flashes of lightning reveal to each his struggling comrades; and each cheers his fellow with the hope of rescue from vessels hovering near. At length when one by one, scores and hundreds have gone down for ever —a solitary swimmer descries in the dim dawn a vessel a mile away. For six hours he has floated on the sea, but the sight gives courage to his will, and strength to

his arms. Almost exhausted he reaches her side, and is drawn on board of her by ropes—'saved by *hope*.'"

So let it be with us in reference even to the affairs of this world. Are we engaged in some lawful enterprise; some matter of unquestionable obligation; some pursuit, of the lawfulness of which we can no more doubt, than we can of our very existence; then let us hold on our way amidst all difficulties, delays, and disappointments, sustained by the power, and exhibiting "the patience, of hope." There may appear but dim lights to cheer even ourselves, and to others nothing but thick darkness, impervious to a single beam, but till the last ray is extinguished in black night, let us never yield to the paralysing influence of despair. Many have given up the pursuit when within a few steps of gaining their desired object. A little more patience would have put them in possession of all they sought.

And if this be true in reference to temporal things, it is equally true in reference to spiritual matters. Are we struggling in the great work of sanctification with some besetting sin, some strong corruption, some powerful enemy, and carrying on the conflict amidst many sad defeats, many humbling disappointments, many mortifying relapses, till we are ready to give up all for lost, and despondingly to say, "I shall yet perish by the hand of Saul?" Let hope come to our rescue, and patience keep up our hope. We *must* struggle; it is a life and death conflict. If we give up, we are lost. There *is* hope. God will assist us. He has promised to make his grace sufficient for us. If defeated ten times, ten times we must return to the conflict. Recollect the story of Robert Bruce and the spider, how, when frequently defeated, he was reclining in despondency, and saw the little reptile,

after many abortive attempts to swing herself from one place to another, succeed at last. Patience in this case was victorious. It roused him from his despondency, called up the same spirit of endurance and resolution in him, and he too, was saved by it. And thus must it also be in the commencement of the great business of eternal salvation. The awakened sinner does not always come at once into the light and liberty of the gospel, or to the full assurance of hope, or faith, or even of understanding. He is like Bunyan's Pilgrim, heavily laden with the burden of his sins, and falls into the Slough of Despond, and, after floundering long in its miry depths, often feels half inclined to get out on the wrong side; and even after escaping from this danger, finds not immediately his way to the cross of Christ. He prays, he reads, he hears; he mortifies his corruptions, and puts aways his sins, but he is not at peace, and is ready to give all up in despair. If any such shall read these pages, to him I say,— "Do not despond: hope on. You are near the cross; look up, there it is. There is the Saviour, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. I do not bid you *wait*. There is no reason why you should not this moment believe and rejoice. But should it be that from any remaining ignorance, any cloud upon your mind, you do not see the glorious object of faith, do not give up the matter, but in the patience of hope struggle against your doubts and fears, your false views and false reasonings, your unbelief and self-righteousness, and come to the Saviour who waits to receive you.

And let the timid believer, a feeble and fainting soul, often cast down by reason of the difficulties of the way, and alarmed at his own weakness, keep up his expectation, and his expectation keep up his patience, and his hope and

patience keep up his endeavours. It may be "with fear and trembling," but still let him work out his own salvation, depending upon *him* who worketh in him to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

To the afflicted believer who may have lost his all by some sudden reverse of circumstances, we say, when we have been shipwrecked, when the storm rages over us, and we struggle in the deep, if we have only a good hope through grace of a better inheritance, we shall emerge at last, though but one solitary plank of worldly substance be left us. The hour of deliverance will come to all who maintain the patience of hope in Jesus Christ. But this patience must have its perfect work, and must be attended with the work of faith and labour of love.

In connection with this passage, we may take up another, I mean Rom. v, 3-4.—"We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; patience, experience; and experience, hope." The connexion of christian graces with each other, and their operation in the way of producing one another, are in this passage beautifully set forth, somewhat resembling the divisions of the stalks of those plants which are jointed, and in which the parts grow one out of another. The apostle states it as a great and blessed privilege of christians, that they not only rejoice in the hope of glory, but "glory in tribulations also;" not, of course, on their own account, but on account of their influence and effects; just as we might rejoice in some present privation, toil, suffering, and perplexity; not for their own sakes, for they are all very painful in their nature, but because of [illegible] great temporal advantage to be derived from them. [illegible] easily understand the reality and the reasonableness of rejoicing in present temporary evil, for the sake of

future and permanent good. What *was* the good which made the apostle glory in tribulation? "Tribulation worketh patience." We must bear in mind here what I have already said, that patience includes the idea of perseverance as well as endurance. Not of itself does tribulation work patience, for it tends to produce *im*-patience, fretfulness, and an abandonment of its own cause. This result of patience from affliction is the work of God's grace in the soul, keeping in subjection our natural tendency to repine and rebel. It is a proof of God's power, wisdom, and love to his people, that he places them in those circumstances, in which he will enable them to exercise one of the most difficult of all graces; thus assisting them to glorify him, and secure to themselves a great reward. If there were no tribulation, there could be no patience, and if no patience, no reward. Yes, this is the only world in which patience can be exercised; there is none in heaven, for there is no suffering there; none in hell, for there is no hope there. Hence it is really an honour, and if we look to the end and issue, a privilege, to be called to suffer. The apostle James represents patience as the perfection of the christian character,—"Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be *perfect, and entire, lacking nothing.*"

"Patience worketh *experience.*" The word translated "experience" signifies "trial," or "proof." This is usually understood to mean proof of God's power, faithfulness, and love, in bestowing his grace upon the christian, according to his gracious promise, for support, consolation, and perseverance. And what afflicted christian who has trusted in God, has not had proof abundant of divine support? What a testimony of God's interposition cannot his children bear who have been enabled patiently

to endure and persevere? Still, this does not appear to be the meaning here. I think the "trial," or "proof," is that of the afflicted christian's own state. Patience worketh "proof" of the sincerity, stedfastness, and strength of his faith. Tribulation is the testing point of godliness; the crucible, the fire of which reveals the nature of the substances cast into it, whether it is gold or dross, or, if mixed, how much there is of each. This is "the fire which is to try every man's work, of what sort it is."—1 Cor. iii, 13. To this the apostle refers, 1 Peter, i, 7. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Tribulation makes, in many cases, sad discoveries of the want of true faith, and in others it makes revelations no less delightful. Many a believer who feared as he entered the cloud, emerged from it with joy and thanksgiving for the knowledge of his state, which he had gained while passing through it.

"Experience worketh hope." It naturally and necessarily leads to an increase of this grace, not of course by changing or strengthening the foundation, but by showing us that we have really built upon it, and are going on to the possession of its glorious object. Experience in this view of it leads on to assurance. The sufferers who, in the days of persecution, gave up property, liberty, friends, and even life itself, for Christ, could stand in no doubt of the sincerity of their faith, or of their personal interest in the blessings of salvation. Amidst their fiery trials, their faith glowed like gold in the crucible, and proclaimed its own existence and nature. So now also, the tried believer who, with deep submission, unmurmuring acquiescence, and holy peace, can patiently bear

the will of God, has proof of his personal faith, and may unfeignedly rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

A PURIFYING HOPE.

The apostle John has set this quality and operation before us in a clear and positive manner: "Every man that hath this hope in him, (*i.e.*, in Christ,) purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—1 John, iii, 3. Every view we can take of the work of redemption, shews its connection with holiness. The Father hath "chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy." The Son did not become incarnate merely to save us from hell, and bring us to heaven; but to "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Spirit is given to "create us anew unto good works." If we are called, it is "with a holy calling." If we are afflicted, that we might "be partakers of God's holiness." If we possess the Scriptures, "that we might be sanctified by the truth." Holiness was the image of God, stamped upon man's soul at his creation, which Satan marred, when his malignity could not reach the divine original; and to restore which, is the ultimate object of redeeming mercy. What would justification be without holiness, but like throwing a vestment of purple and gold over a leprous body? What is heaven, but the region, the home, the very centre of holiness? Take away holiness from an angel and he becomes a devil; add holiness to the nature of a devil and he becomes an angel. Were a man without holiness to enter heaven, its blessed inhabitants would retire from him with horror and alarm, as we should on earth from a person suffering with the plague. Without

holiness a soul in heaven would be like a man with a fever at a feast; he could touch nothing, taste nothing, relish nothing. Hence therefore the meaning and force of the apostle's declaration, that hope is the great purifier. Fear of hell may do something in this way; hope of heaven will do more.

The model of christian holiness is Christ, not merely in his divine, but in his human nature; and that nature, not only in its heavenly, but in its earthly state. Christ as the man of sorrows;—as exposed to temptation; as subject to affliction; as the servant of God; as the Son learning obedience by the things which he suffered; as separate from sin and sinners, though dwelling in the midst of them. Here is our model; the infinite, eternal, almighty God, exhibited in the miniature form of the perfect man, presented in dimensions the eye can comprehend. In our zeal for Christ's divinity, let us not forget his humanity. The man Christ, the divine man, the model man, must be before us, and our eye must be ever upon our copy and our page.

"Every man that hath this hope *purifieth himself*." While as a weak, ignorant, and sinful creature, his dependence is to be upon the Spirit of God; as a rational one, he is to exert all his faculties of intellect, heart, will, conscience, memory, in this great work of moral purification. The apostle teaches us in this language that each individual's moral cleansing depends, under God, principally upon himself; not upon ministers, nor sermons, nor ordinances, nor books,—but upon *himself*—upon his care to watch over the motions of his own heart—upon his vigilance to guard against temptations from without his meditation upon Christ's example—upon his to seek, by prayer, the succour of God's grace.

A man that would cleanse his person from defilement would not merely place himself beneath a falling shower of rain, but would collect the descending water and apply it to his body. He would purify himself: and so must we our souls.

Hope prompts to this; helps us in it; and gives energy and success to our endeavours. All men act as they hope; their desires and expectations dictate and ensure appropriate conduct. This is an instinct of their nature, a moral necessity, an infallible result. If a man have before him any worldly object of desire and expectation, and there be some antecedent which he must possess, in order to gain his ulterior end, he will labour to secure this pre-requisite; this *sine qua non*. Now the christian's desire and expectation are fixed upon heaven, his heart is upon this: but he is told "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Then he knows, he feels, he determines, that he must be holy. If we have some cherished object of desire, and there be something which must meeten us for enjoying it when it is possessed, we naturally labour to gain that preparedness. The christian knows that he could not without holiness enjoy heaven, if he were admitted to its felicities, and therefore his hope sets him upon this personal purification as his "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light." The desire and expectation of an earthly object make us eager at once to get as much of it as we can, even before we come into full possession and fruition. The christian knows that the chief felicity of heaven consists in absolute sinless perfection. It is his bliss to think that there he shall, according to his measure, be "holy as God is holy." It would be no heaven to him if he could carry sin with him. Holiness is the richest, ripest fruit that grows on the tree of life,

in the midst of the paradise of God. The believer's hope therefore prompts him to hunger and thirst after righteousness, as a means of enjoying an earnest, a foretaste of heavenly bliss. Hope like the true hearted spies sent by Joshua to search the promised land, crosses the Jordan, and plucking the grapes of Eshcol, returns to bid the soul go forward. When we are very intent on gaining an object, we are very glad to meet with evidence that we are in the right way to obtain it, and we search very diligently for as much proof as we can accumulate. What is the evidence, the only evidence, that can be depended on that we are going to heaven? Holiness —conformity to the example of Christ. Now he who is in earnest to reach the heavenly Canaan, whose heart is set on that sublime and glorious object, will feel an intense solicitude to know if he is in the way to it. A serious doubt on this subject is distressing to him: knowing that holiness is the proof of safety, he will ever be anxious to conform himself to the example of Christ. He who is studying the life of Jesus, as a child studies his copy to do something like it, need not doubt his state. He may not, and will not be a *perfect* resemblance to Christ, any more than the boy at school will equal his copy: but the great Master will approve of the sincere and diligent attempt to do well, although there may be some defects, and dissimilarities, and the writing have some irregularities, and the page some blots.

Nor is this all; the very contemplation of heaven, in which hope indulges, has a transforming power. This passion naturally and necessarily assimilates the mind of the person who cherishes it, to the object which he has before him. The miser becomes more [illegible]erly; the sensualist more sensual; the ambitious man

more ambitious; the warrior more warlike—by their hopes. Desire and expectation, in relation to earthly things, have a mighty power of assimilation, and may be carried to such an extent as to produce monomania, and the man's soul becomes quite possessed with the object on which his heart is set. So is it, in rational measure, with the expectants of eternal glory. What is heaven? We have again and again answered that question. It is not a Roman Elysium; nor a Mohammedan Paradise,—but a state where we shall see Christ as he is, and be like him. It is the region of moral purity. Its society is holy—a holy God, a holy Saviour, holy angels, and holy men. Its occupations are holy—the service of God—the song of cherubim and seraphim, crying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; and all other things in harmony with this sacred employment and felicity. Now every comtemplation of this state tends to assimilate the soul to its likeness. While gazing upon it, delighting in it, longing for it, we grow in resemblance to it. Like as when a man turns his face to the sun, its rays fall and dwell upon his countenance; or as when a polished mirror is turned to the great luminary, it reflects its splendour;—so the soul of the believer turned heavenwards, becomes heavenly.

If, then, hope produces holiness, how important is it to keep up the power of the cause, in order to the production of the effect. Despondency has a chilling, withering influence upon the holy energies of the soul, like the east wind on flowers and blossoms; while hope is the sunshine of the soul, which cherishes the moral vegetation, and makes it look verdant and flourishing. The christian who would grow in grace, and make advances in spiritual purity, should keep up a good hope. His

doubts and fears are not only hindrances to his happiness, but to his holiness also. Despondency is not only uncomfortable, but unholy.

A HOPE THAT MAKETH NOT ASHAMED.

"Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which he hath given to us."—Romans v, 6.

This is a high commendation of the grace we are now considering; one that by contrast will come home to the heart of every believer. It is a peculiarity which can be scarcely affirmed of any other expectation. Can the man of wealth, of pleasure, or of ambition, say this of the object of his pursuit and possession? Perhaps the apostle, when he wrote this passage, thought of that declaration of the Psalmist,—"Our fathers trusted in thee, and were not confounded."—Psalm xxii, 4. It is the true wisdom of faith to strengthen itself by making a discreet, yet bold and unhesitating use of the experience of others. Especially should the children of the godly, in their religious course and conflicts, apply for their encouragement what their pious ancestors have testified, and, in pleading with God, make use of his dealings with *them* as a ground of confidence for themselves.

There are three, and but three, grounds on which men can be ashamed of their hopes:—

1. When in better states of mind, and in clearer views of the subject, they find that they have desired, and perhaps have obtained, a wrong thing; a thing which no right-minded man ought to have coveted and sought. How large a portion of man's earthly desires and expectations are fixed on objects which religion, reason, and con-

science, at length tell them are forbidden by God. It is awful to think what a preponderance of human energy, in many men's pursuits, is going forth after illicit gains and pleasures. In some few cases, alas, how few! they are at last brought to see their iniquity, and to blush over it. They discover, to their shame and confusion, that they had been kindling unhallowed fires in their soul, and, like Balaam, resolutely going forward in a forbidden path. Oh, the confusion, humiliation, and deep compunction which some have felt in looking back upon past objects of desire and expectation. Bad hopes have caused bitter tears to myriads. It is of course a mercy to find out that they were bad, and to abandon them, but how much greater a mercy never to have had them. And this is the climax of all mercy to know, as the christian does, that *his* is a "*good* hope." His desires and expectations are indulged under the approving smile of religion, reason, and conscience. Who ever blushed over the hope of heaven? Let the christian raise his desires to the greatest intensity, let him carry his expectations up to the highest pitch, he never need to check his ardour; he never need to say, "Am I right in all this?" May I not be yet ashamed of having thought, and felt, and wished, and laboured so earnestly?

2. Men are ashamed of hopes that end in utter disappointment: and how many do? Of the objects of earthly pursuit, how many turn out to be mere shadows? Think what millions every day sit down in grief and dismay, amidst the wreck of shattered schemes, and then lay their heads at night upon their pillows, to pass the sleepless hours of silence and darkness, in ruminating upon defeated purposes and frustrated expectations. How much of human grief arises from this source. True

it is, that in multitudes of these cases, men are the victims of folly, as well as of disappointment. They had been employed in building castles in the air. Their desires were the offspring of unauthorised ambition, and their expectations had no other basis than their own wild imaginations. Observers saw, if they did not, that there was no probability in their prospects; their hopes were the speculations of their fancies, like those of the Persian's mentioned in the first chapter, and they therefore deserved the disappointment they experienced. But this does not apply to all. Even those who are most moderate in their desires, and most sober in their expectations, who have reason, religion, and conscience on their side, and are thus justified both by God and man in their schemes, even these are doomed oftentimes to disappointment. It is said, of God, in dealing with us, "He disappointeth the hope of man." I admit that, in such cases, there may be no shame felt over the object selected, or the means used; no consciousness of guilt, no blushing for folly; but still, in a mitigated and figurative sense, even such persons are ashamed of their hopes.

This will not apply to the christian. No disappointment awaits him. *He*, in his expectations of life eternal, is building *no* castles in the air. His is "a sure and certain hope." Its foundation is the work of Christ, the promise and oath of God. Should he even be mistaken in his faith,—should he have been following only cunningly-devised fables in resting his belief on the gospel of Christ,—should he sink at death into annihilation, even in that case, he would not live to blush; he will have no existence, and therefore have no consciousness of disappointment. But this is a mere negative view of the subject. The gospel is *not* a cunningly-devised fable, but

a divine revelation; he will live, and will realise his expectation, and have his desires gratified. No, no; wherever there is disappointment, there will be none here. His most assured earthly expectations may fail; what appear to be substances may be only shadows; what seemed to be stars may be only meteors. But this awaits not the christian. Heaven is no mere speculation. It is a glorious certainty. All the evidences of christianity, as a revelation from God, sustain his anticipations. Doubts and fears now sometimes, like fleecy clouds swimming over the sun's disc, occasionally throw their shadows on his path, and for a little while darken his prospect, but even these will all vanish, and the whole scene of heavenly glory shine out in cloudless and eternal splendour.

3. But there is another cause of men's being ashamed of their earthly hopes, and that is, the disproportion between the expectation and the fruition. How far short, in most cases, does the reality fall of the anticipation. "Hope tells a flattering tale," and always looks at its object through a magnifying medium, and usually one of high power, and paints it also in colours supplied rather by the imagination than the judgment. To him who surveys the prospect from an eminence, where everything looks beautiful, the cottage and the homestead are all picturesque; but how different an aspect does it wear when these parts of the picture are surveyed near at hand, with the dirty heaps, and broken windows, and shattered doors, and other signs of poverty, which distance had hidden from view. So is it with our hopes. "Distance lends enchantment to the scene," which usually dissolves on a near approach. How few of our expectations have been realised up to their full amount. How often, when we

have gained the object of desire and pursuit, have we exclaimed, with surprise and grief,—"*And is this all?* O thou gay deceiver, how hast thou beguiled and cheated me. Are all thy promises come to this?" In ordinary cases this is true, and in some, it is absolutely afflictive. How much time, strength, energy, and money have been sometimes expended upon an object of desire; what expectations have been indulged; what bright visions have been raised; what blissful anticipations have been let loose; what large calculations of coming enjoyment have been made, and all this to issue in the sad confession, "And this is all." Must not such a man be ashamed of his hope?

Again, I triumphantly say, "*This will never happen to the christian,*" *when he reaches heaven. He* will never have to say, "And is this *all?*" The Queen of Sheba, when she saw the glory of Solomon, confessed with delighted surprise, "That the half had not been told her." And the glorified spirit will declare that a thousandth part had not been told. A thousandth part of heaven would a thousand times more than compensate for all the time, the energy, the strength we had spent in seeking after it. Could it be obtained in no other way, and could be obtained in this, a thousand martyrdoms, successively endured, would be a cheap purchase of "the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." If there be shame in heaven, it will not be that our hopes were so high, but that they were so low; not that we expected too much, but too little. How will it surprise us as we walk the golden streets, that we could, with such a prospect before us, dwell so little upon it. No taunt will be thrown at us from any quarter, "See what your hope has come to: do you not blush to compare the reality with the expectation?"

But now dwell upon the *logic* of the apostle, as well as upon his assertion, "Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which he hath given to us." The "love of God" is an ambiguous phrase, and means, in some places, God's love to us, and in others, our love to God. Commentators are divided in opinion, as to which of these the apostle refers to in this passage. By a proper explanation, I think both may be included. When a person loves us, and is kind to us, he sheds abroad upon us his love, by conferring upon us its *fruits*. His love is immanent in himself; it is its gifts that are bestowed upon us, and yet in common parlance, we say he has bestowed much kindness upon us. God sheds abroad *his* love in our hearts, by giving us the Holy Spirit. Now the Spirit of God, by his work in us, gives us assurance that our hope will never make us ashamed; and he does this in two ways: first—By giving us a foretaste, pledge, and meetness of the heavenly inheritance. He imparts such a bright view, and such a deep sense of God's love to us, and causes this so to fill the heart with joy unspeakable, as to convince the soul, from its happiness in this world, that in the full enjoyment of this love in heaven, there will be no disappointment. Some believers, as John Howe, Halyburton, Payson, as we have showed, and others, have had such a perception and sense of God's love, as was almost overpowering: and even believers of less stature have known something of this. There are moments in the life of all real christians, when their views and sense of God's love, in itself and in its gifts, are so vivid, as to lead them to say, "No—this cannot be delusion—this frame of mind must be God's work; and if, in this world of ignorance, and earthliness, and imperfection, there be

such happiness,—what will heaven be, where the sun of God's love will, without any intervening clouds, pour its full effulgence upon my happy spirit?"

Then the work of the Holy Spirit is not only to reveal God's love to us, but to produce in us love to God in return. "We love him," said the apostle, "because he first loved us." In ordinary cases, love generally produces love. It always does here. Whenever the Holy Spirit really gives a clear view and deep sense of God's love to us, he, by the same operation of his grace, subdues the enmity of the carnal mind, and produces a genuine and supreme love to God. And who, that knows the reality and power of this divine passion, does not know that it is heaven begun? Christian reader, have there not been moments in your experience, when love to God has been so fervid in your soul, when the heaven-kindled flame has burnt so strongly, as to compel you to say, "If heaven, as I am taught, is to consist, so far as its subjective happiness is concerned, in the perfect love of God,—I feel assured, from what I now experience, that I can never there be ashamed of my hope."

And then there is another way in which the work of God's Spirit assures us we shall never be ashamed of our hope—and that is, this work strengthens our faith in the divine origin and truth of the gospel. We have already shown how faith and hope operate on each other. The former must of course be considered as the originator and sustainer of the latter; but then the latter may strengthen, by acting back upon, the former. Among the evidences of the truth of Christianity, the *experimental* one is, to many persons, the strongest, and to all really converted persons, it carries great weight: "He that believeth, hath the witness in himself." Dr. Chalmers

truly says, "That in the course of the believer's pilgrimage, never does the hope of experience supersede the hope of faith. So far from this, in the very proportion that experience grows in breadth, does faith grow in brightness. And it is this last, which still constitutes the sheet anchor of the soul, and forms the main element of its peace, and joy, and righteousness. It is well that in looking inwardly upon himself, he sees the growing lineaments of such a grace and such a character forming upon his person, as vouch him to be ripening for eternity. But along with this process, he will look outwardly upon God in Christ, and there see, in constantly increasing manifestation, the truth, and mercy, and the unchangeableness of his reconciled Father,—by far the firmest and stablest guarantee of his future destiny. The same agent, in fact, who brings about the one effect, brings about the other. He causes you not merely to see yourself to be an epistle of the Spirit of God, and to read therein the works of your personal interest in the promises; but he also causes you to see the promises, as standing in the outward record, invested with a light, and an honesty, and a freeness, which you did not see at the first revelation of them." Thus the good works, and the graces of personal religion, which are the fruits of the Spirit, not merely supply you with a foretaste of heaven, and assure you that it will exceed all your highest and happiest attainments now; but they cast back a reflex light on the faith from which they emanated, and equally convince you of the certainty as well as greatness of that celestial state. So that God's love to us, revealed by the light of the Spirit; and our love to God, produced by the same divine agent, assure us we shall never be ashamed of our anticipations of heaven.

THE HARMONY BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR.

All the affections of the soul have their opposites, as love and hatred, joy and grief, hope and fear. These, though seemingly antagonistic, can be shewn to work harmoniously, and sometimes, as in the case before us, to accomplish the same object. There are many passages, as this treatise proves, in which the believer is called upon to hope, to hope perfectly, to have the full assurance of hope, and yet as many in which he is as earnestly called upon to fear. To say nothing of the texts of the Old Testament, which was a system of bondage and fear, there are many to the same effect in the New Testament, under which we have "not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." "Work out your salvation," said the apostle, "with fear and trembling." "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Very many others might be selected, but these will suffice to show that fear, as well as hope, is a christian grace, and a grace to be exercised not only by the unconverted, but the converted man; not only by the man *without* hope, but by the man who *has* hope. Now as these two are antagonistic in their nature, how can they be exercised by the same individual, in reference to the same object? Does not perfect hope, as well as perfect love, cast out fear? Certainly. But then it must be *perfect* love in one case, and perfect hope in the other. "God has wisely ordained that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall like the two opposite scales of a balance, when one rises the other sinks. Light and darkness

unavoidably succeed each other; if light prevails, so much does darkness cease, and no more; and if light decay, so much does darkness prevail. So it is in the heart of a child of God; if divine love decay, and fall asleep, the light and joy of hope go out, and dark fear arises; and if, on the contrary, divine love prevail and come into lively exercise, this brings in the brightness of hope, and drives away black fear before it." * Another of our old divines represents the matter thus:—"Fear and hope in the soul of a christian are like the cork and lead to a net; the cork keeps it from sinking, and the lead keeps it from too much floating; so it is here, fear keeps hope from degenerating into presumption, and hope keeps fear from sinking into despair. If you do abstract fear from hope, the soul will be lazy, and if you abstract hope from fear, it will sink into despondency. Therefore there must be fear with hope."†

Let us, however, examine this a little farther. Can any hope, however strong and assured, altogether exclude fear? Certainly not. And the greater the object, the greater will be the liability to fear. To be totally without fear is the condition of possession and fruition. A man in the pursuit of an earthly object, however confident he may be of ultimately possessing it, must admit, theoretically, at least, the possibility, if not the probability, of his losing it. The thought must, and does, occasionally cross his mind, that after all he may be disappointed, and the consequences of disappointment must be at the same time present to his thoughts. This fear may be, and is, far less than his hopes; it may not materially lessen the assurance of his mind that he shall succeed, but it is

* Jonathan Edwards.

† Dr. Bates, vol. iii, 185.

there, and it is useful to him, for it keeps him in action, it sustains as well as prompts exertion.

So is it in the divine life. As long as heaven is an object of hope, and not the subject of possession, there must be some degree of fear mingled with it. And this proves that even the full assurance of hope does not mean, as we have shewn, a man's being as certain of reaching heaven at last, as if he were already in it. The christian hope, like the christian love, when it is perfect, does exclude fear. But what fear? That which has torment; the servile spirit of bondage, which, like a spectre, is ever haunting and terrifying the imagination, filling the soul with such trembling forebodings of wrath to come, as prevents all joy and peace in believing. This is the fear which both love and hope shut out, and keep out from the soul; a fear that is ever trembling under an apprehension of an angry God and a coming hell; a fear that upon every fresh discovery of sin, and every fresh sense of guilt, is thrown into despondency and wrapped in darkness; a fear that, under every new sight of our spiritual enemies, difficulties, and dangers, and every new consciousness of our own weakness, sinks into a paroxysm of despairing helplessness; a fear that turns the soul more frequently to the threatenings of God's Word than to his promises; that is more frequently at Sinai than at Calvary, and is more apt to dwell upon the torments of hell than the felicities of heaven; such a fear is the spirit of bondage, which is decidedly opposed to the spirit of adoption, and shews that the soul is not yet brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. *This* fear hope does cast out. But a fear that produces reverence and caution, that makes its

subject watchful against sin, and, in a modified and chastened sense, afraid of coming short of the heavenly felicity, it does not cast out. In fact, the more hope there is, the more fear of this kind there will be.

How closely and how beautifully are these two affections united by the Psalmist,—"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." Holy fear and confident hope therefore may not only consist, but must concur. This striking passage, in which these two affections are so balanced, we should all have as a frontlet before our eyes, and engraven, as upon the palms of our hands. Satan, so skilful in the art of temptation, and so successful in the business of destruction, has machinations adapted to all constitutions and cases; and while he tempts the fearful to despair, endeavours to seduce the confident to presumption, careless security, unwatchfulness, and sin; and never so glories in his triumphs, as when he can make their very expectation of heaven, by its inflating them with some degree of spiritual pride, the occasion of their fall. Holy fear will be to our joy, what the cooling influence of water is to the heated iron,—that which prevents it from firing the whole, by the rapidity of its motion and the intensity of its friction.

We see, then, what is the christian's true temper of mind. There should be a prevailing, sustaining, assured hope of eternal life, such as is attended with no serious, perplexing, much less tormenting doubt of its final possession, and such as shall enable the believer to go on his way rejoicing; yet this, attended with so much fear of falling short, as while it does not materially interfere with his strong consolation, shall keep him watchful,

diligent, and prayerful. Thus hope and fear, like the two angels that led Lot from Sodom to Zoar, shall conduct the christian from the city of destruction to the celestial city.

"IF IN THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPE IN CHRIST, WE ARE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE."—
1 Cor. xv. 19.

This passage has been, to some good people, a source of perplexity, as seeming to suggest the idea that all the happiness which Christianity brings to the children of men, belongs to another world: and that if this fail us, the life of the infidel and the worldling is to be preferred to that of the believer. This is contrary to the views and feelings of all true christians,—for they are ever ready to acknowledge that, even should christianity be a fable and there were no heaven to come, they have found more true peace of mind and felicity in a life of piety, than they once did, or ever could, find in a life of sin. This is very true, and the passage does not intend to assert that there is no real happiness in the present practice of piety. The apostle teaches in another place, that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come;" and millions have found it so: he therefore does not mean, in this passage, to contradict the testimony of Solomon, "That wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is a pure and solid happiness in piety, compared with which the pleasures of sin are as muddy streams to the water of the clear flowing spring. So that if there were

no future state, there is more pleasure in the way of holiness, than of transgression.

Some have supposed the apostle alludes exclusively to himself and his fellow-labourers in the cause of Christ, whose life was one constant and dreadful martyrdom; and truly, apart from the hope of immortality, and the final possession of eternal glory, they were the most miserable of men, especially when to their sufferings we add the self-reproach and agonies of conscience they must have sometimes endured, under the consciousness, if Christ did not rise, of being false witnesses for God, in testifying his resurrection. They must, in that case, have been not only the greatest of sufferers, but the basest of criminals. But though in a special manner it was applicable to them, and to all others who have drank to its dregs the bitter cup of persecution, this passage does not apply exclusively to them. That there *was* a special and primary reference to them is, I think, evident from what Paul said in his former epistle,—chap. iv. 9-14. And from his mention of his own case, in the 31st and 32nd verses of this chapter.

But still there is also a general principle contained in this passage,—and that is, that the chief happiness of the christian is to be waited for, in faith and hope, and is to come in another world. It is of great importance to bear this constantly in remembrance, as it would check that too great eagerness after amusement, and that impatience under self-denial, which are manifested by many professing christians. We are not so much to seek for perfect happiness here, as to prepare for it hereafter. There can be no doubt that the christian life, whatever felicity it yields, and much it does yield, is, notwithstanding, a constant state of self-denial. We are to

"mortify our members which are upon earth," and to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." There are many sources of enjoyment forbidden to the children of light, to which the children of this world repair without scruple or reluctance. Christians see the joyous countenances of the lovers of pleasure, and hear their merry voices, and feel sometimes a sense of sacrifice in retiring from the forbidden fruit. They are often called to take up a cross, where others grasp a garland of delight.

That man knows not his own heart, or has forgotten its history and its occasional yearnings, who denies that he has never felt the *motions* of the flesh after some of the purest of the *works* of the flesh. What is it that enables the believer to carry on this life of sacrifice, to separate himself from gaieties and delights which others enjoy? To retire, and sometimes to retire amidst the anger, ridicule, and persecution of his friends and companions? To be laughed at as a puritan, precisionist, or hypocrite? The hope of eternal life. He deems many things which those around him approve, to be contrary to his expectations of eternal glory. Take from him this hope therefore, and he is in some respects a pitiable man. In proportion to the elevation of our hopes are we to be commiserated for their final disappointment. And no one has such hopes as the christian, so high, so vast, so sublime. Is it not a deplorable condition to be in, to embrace a cross, to become ridiculously singular, obnoxious to many, and often to be disquieted in ourselves, by the chase of a bubble, and in contemplation of a vision?

It does not follow however, we again say, that christians would be in fact more unhappy than other men, if there

should be no future reward; for even then their expectations of it, and the consolation they have thence derived, would counterbalance their peculiar trials, self-denials and hardships. No, no, the apostle did not intend to teach that apart from a future world, a man would be more happy in vice than in virtue. In the love of God, in purity of life, in the means of grace, in the fellowship of the saints, he has more real happiness than the sinner has in his evil courses. The apostle does not refer so much to their personal feelings, as to their condition and their hopes. At the same time we would most emphatically remark, that the Scriptures do not represent as the only or chief motive to good conduct, that virtue is its own reward. It is so, we know, as we all must have experienced who have practised it. But this is quite too refined, too much opposed in some cases to the temporal interests of mankind, and therefore too feeble a motive for promoting its practice with the generality of men. Mr. Hall has most correctly, as well as most eloquently argued that "the system of infidelity is not only incapable of arming virtue for great and trying occasions, but leaves it unsupported in the most ordinary occurrences. In vain will its advocates expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course; for though you may remind the offender that in disregarding them he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction; yet if he reply that *his* taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end.

"Rewards and punishments assigned by infinite power,

afford a palpable and pressing motive, which can never be neglected without renouncing the character of a rational creature; but tastes and relishes are not to be prescribed.

"As the present world is to infidelity the only place of recompense, whenever the practice of virtue fails to promise the greatest sum of present good; cases which often occur in reality, and much oftener in appearance; a deviation from rectitude becomes the part of wisdom; and should the path of virtue, in addition to this, be obstructed by disgrace, torment, or death, to persevere would be madness and folly, and a violation of the great and most essential law of nature. Virtue being on these principles in numberless instances at war with self-preservation, never can, or ought to become, a fixed habit of the mind."

THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE.

With what frequency and impressive solemnity is this subject referred to in Scripture, especially in the book of Job. The complicated sorrows of the suffering patriarch were bitterly aggravated by the suspicions, accusations, and reproaches of his sadly mistaken friends. Adopting the false principle that character is determined by external circumstances, they interpreted his afflictive condition as a punishment for his sins, and a revelation of his hypocrisy. Hence the application to him of such language as the following: "The hypocrite's hope shall perish."—viii. 13. "A hypocrite shall not come before him."—xiii. 16. "The congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate."—xv. 34. "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment."—xx. 5. "What is the hope of a hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his

soul."—xxvii. 8. These passages contain a terrible truth; but they did not apply to Job. A hypocrite is the most odious of all characters on earth, and a character that has always been found upon earth. There are hypocrites in all departments of human action,—in politics, in friendship, in business, in morals, and alas in religion also. "Wherever there is genuine coin, it will be likely to be counterfeited; and the fact of a counterfeit is always a tribute to the intrinsic worth of the coin —for who would be at the pains to counterfeit what is worthless?"

It is the greatest madness, as well as wickedness, in the world, to be a hypocrite in religious profession. The worldling hates him for being a christian even in appearance; God hates him doubly, because he is a christian *only* in appearance. He has thus the detestation of both, and no comfort in himself. "Yet, if thou wilt not be good, as thou seemest," says Bishop Hall, "I hold it better to seem ill, as thou art. An openly wicked man doth much hurt with notorious sins; but a hypocrite doth at last more shame goodness by seeming good. I would rather be an open wicked man than a hypocrite; but I would rather be no man, than either of them." The same good Prelate, in a sermon which he preached before King James the First's court,—a sermon which has more of awful denunciation against sin, and threatenings against sinners, and descriptions of eternal torment, than the plainest methodist preacher would now like to deliver,— has the following quaint remarks, "He that hath only the form of godliness is a hypocrite: he that hath not even a form is an atheist. I know not whether I should sever these two: both are human devils well met: a hypocrite is a masked devil; an atheist is a devil unmasked.

Whether of them, without repentance, shall be deeper in the hell they shall both hereafter feel, I determine not."*

Hypocrisy, in its generic sense, means pretending to religion, while there is none—keeping up the semblance without the reality. But there are two classes of hypocrites—or, at any rate, two degrees of hypocrisy. First, —those who, though they profess to be religious, *know* they are not, and who have assumed the profession for some worldly advantage they expect to gain by it, either in the way of profit or applause. They are *intentional* deceivers, and are conscious of the deception they are practising. These are, in the fullest sense of the word, hypocrites. It is to these our Lord alludes, with so much indignation, in his ministry. This is the most disgusting and loathsome species of hypocrisy. The other sort are the formal, refined, and unintentional hypocrites; that is, the men who have but the semblance of religion, yet ignorantly mistake it for the substance. "Now both these agree in this, that they are deceivers, for deceit is the formal constituent element of hypocrisy; but their difference lies in this, that the one designedly deceives the world, the other unintentionally deceives himself: the one resolvedly goes towards hell, the other sets out for heaven, but carelessly mistakes the way: one is a mere

* This is but a specimen, and a slight one too, of the language which even in those corrupt days was addressed by Episcopal lips to Courtly ears. In reading the sermons which in those days were delivered both by the serious Episcopal preachers, as well as by Nonconformists, I am astonished at their plainness, their earnestness, and their fearlessness. Who can read the discourses of Donne, Hall, Brownrigg, Ezekiel Hopkins, and of Owen, and especially Baxter,—when Courts were addressed by the former, and the House of Commons by the latter,—without feeling how much the modern pulpit is inferior, in intense earnestness, to the preachers of those times. It may be they erred on the side of coarse descriptions of the consequences of sin, and the punishment of sinners; but we err as much on the side of a false refinement, and are almost afraid to "mention hell to ears polite."

shadow, the other is a rotten substance." The first is a much rarer character than the other. It is only now and then we meet with hypocrisy in its intentional and grosser form; but on every hand crowds are to be found who are self-deceived. Our cities, towns, and villages, are, to a considerable extent, peopled with them; and they abound even in our churches. Self-deception was not unknown in our Lord's time, and under his ministry. Even when a cross stood in the way of a christian profession, and in order to become a professor a man must take it up and bear it onward, under these circumstances self-deception was frequent. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."—Matt. vii. 21-23. This is really one of the most alarming passages of Holy Writ, as shewing how far persons may go in self-deception, and how perseveringly they may continue in it—even *to* death, and *through* it, up to the very judgment seat of Christ. When persecution raged, and it might have been supposed no one could impose upon himself by a mere form of godliness without the power, and nothing short of real conversion by divine grace could lead any one to take up the christian name, even then, this modified hypocrisy prevailed, and unsound profession was common. How much more common might it be supposed to be now, when we sit under our vine and fig tree, none daring to make us afraid: when it adds to, rather than detracts from, our respectability: when it calls for so little self-

denial and self-sacrifice. I am truly alarmed and terrified at the thought of this state of things, when multitudes are going down to the pit with a lie in their right hand, floating to perdition on the stream of delusion.

Hypocrites may have, and really have, their hopes, even the grosser class of them. They misunderstand the holy and righteous character of God, and endeavour to persuade themselves he is too merciful to destroy any of his creatures. They misapprehend the nature of sin in general, and have light views of their own. They find out all extenuating circumstances of their sins, and persuade themselves that there is a kind of necessity for their seeming to be religious, combined with an impossibility of their being actually so. Then in order to defend themselves from the accusations of their conscience, they will be often bribing and endeavouring to pacify it with some specious outward performances. When this will not do, they will contrive to shelter themselves under the pretext that there is a little hypocrisy in those who are considered real christians, since none of them quite live up to their profession. If this is insufficient, they will found their hopes upon the principles of infidelity, and believe that all religion is a sham, and that they shall do as well in the next world, after serving themselves by a pretended religion in this, as they who are sincere. Especially will they lay hold of the failings of strict professors, and bolster up their expectations by saying, If these do much in the way of sin, they may do much more, and get to heaven at last. Hypocrites will often keep up their hope by comparing themselves with others who are openly vicious, and apparently worse than they are; and think themselves religious, not from any goodness of their own, but from

the badness of others. "They raise a structure of reputed holiness, and therefore of hope, upon the deplorable ruins of other men's character. This was the chief ground of the Pharisee's hope,—*he was not as other men*, an adulterer, covetous, swearer, or the like. There are many paths to perdition in the broad way, some of which are more cleanly and some more foul, yet they all lead to the same end; and those shall as certainly arrive at hell that tread the cleanlier paths of a refined hypocrisy, as those that track through the mire and dirt of the grossest abominations."

But how shall we account for the false hope of the other class of hypocrites, the unintentional ones? In much the same way as in the preceding case, with some additional causes. Ignorance of the nature of true religion; setting up false standards of personal godliness, such as church relationship, and an orthodox creed; depending upon the opinions of others concerning their state, rather than the testimony of their own conscience; mistaking a mere excitement of the emotions for real conversion; relying upon a public profession as an evidence of the possession of divine grace in the soul; comparing themselves with the great bulk of professors, and concluding that they are as good, and shall do as well, as they; and especially the neglect of close, anxious, serious, and deep examination of their own state. Self-deception begins in ignorance, and is continued by the want of self-trial. A man must dive into his own heart, if he would know his state; he must take the candle of the Lord, which is the Word of God, and go down into the depths of his own soul, and search every corner, just as he would his cellar, in which he feared was concealed a thief, a murderer, or a kindling

fire. No wonder so many are deceiving themselves, when they are so fearfully neglectful of this duty of "proving their own selves." It were almost to be desired that in addition to the silent admonition of Scripture, and the earnest exhortations from the pulpit, the sound would break in thunder from the skies, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," and that the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, which are to usher in the day of judgment, would awaken the slumbering multitude with those words; "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Ordinary methods lamentably fail. Under the most searching ministry, the most alarming sermons, and the most discriminating marks of sincerity laid down, a fatal delusion sends multitudes to perdition.

But this hope of the hypocrite shall perish. It sometimes dies out in life, and the deceived man sinks down into a comfortless creature, without a beam of joy, or a feeling of peace. It was never more than a dim spark, and now in some great affliction, or sudden calamity, that expires, and leaves him in rayless night. He finds out his delusion and sees that his were but the groundless expectations of an unconverted man. The world fails him, and his hope has vanished under the ruins of his fortune. He realizes now the force of Bildad's cutting interrogation; "Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as the spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."—Job, viii, 11-15. Or under some heart-searching sermon, or awakening book,

his false hopes fall from around him, and the dreadful secret is revealed to him, of an unchanged heart. Many carry on the delusion to the bed of death. The last enemy often comes to shatter with dreadful power the vain confidences of hypocritical professors. Then that saying of the Psalmist passes upon them; "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, and in that very day, all his thoughts perish." All his fond expectations then upbraid him to his face; Satan, his greatest flatterer, shall then laugh him to scorn; death shall confute all his confidences, and the dawning lights of eternity convince him that his hopes of heaven were groundless and irrational. Many, however are not awakened even by the harsh voice of the king of terrors, from the dream of a false profession; they pass through the dark valley, with the delusive light of a lamp of their own kindling; but which, the next moment, is quenched in the darkness of eternal night. The hope of the hypocrite then perishes, in the day when God taketh away his soul. Few things are more tormenting to a man than the feelings of disappointment, and it is the climax of all misery, the most venomous of all poison of the spirit, when to these are added the torments of self reproach. How terrible will be the disappointment and remorse of the hypocrite, when death, which closes his eyes to all the scenes of earth, shall open them to those of the bottomless pit.

Oh, think of a man who has been long away from his pleasant home, his wife and children, enduring all kinds of hardships, of bad weather, rough roads, inconvenient inns, great fear of dangers, and much unkind treatment; but who solaces himself all the while with sweet thoughts of his arrival at his own house, and the bosom of his family; but who, as soon as he reaches the thres-

hold of his dwelling, is seized, put in irons, and immured for life in a dark dungeon: what horror, and surprise, and overwhelming disappointment seize and hold him. But what is this, to the horror and surprise of him, who when he expects to arise from the bed of death, to the felicities of heaven, sinks from it, to the miseries of hell. In the case of the traveller just mentioned, if he be a christian, he carries to his dungeon the hope of immortality, and knows that however bitter his disappointment, and however long his confinement, he shall rise at last from that dismal state, to a glorious eternity, made more glorious at length, by contrast with his previous one. But the hope of the hypocrite makes his eternity more miserable, by its contrast with the expectations he had till then indulged. How terrible is the language of Dr. South; "Former happiness is the greatest ingredient of present misery. It would be some relief to a condemned sinner, if with the loss of his hope, he could lose his memory too; but alas, when he shall lie down in sorrow and torment, this will recall to his mind all that peace, comfort, and tranquillity, that his false hopes formerly fed him with. No voice will be heard in hell so loud and frequent as this sad and doleful one. 'My hopes deceived me, my confidence deluded me.' Nothing so comfortable as hope crowned with fruition; nothing so tormenting as hopes snapped off with disappointment and frustration; and were it lawful to wish an enemy completely miserable, I would wish that he might strongly hope, and never obtain. Now from what has been determined, I think we may truly conclude, that of the two, the despairing reprobate is happier than the hoping reprobate. They both indeed, fall equally low; but then he that hopes hath the greater fall, because he falls from

the highest place; he that despairs goes to hell, but then he goes thither with expectation; though he is condemned, he is not surprised; he has inured his heart to the flames, and has made those terrors familiar to him, by the continual horrors of his meditation; so that when he dies, he passes but from one hell to another, and his actual condemnation is not the beginning, but the carrying on of his former torment. In short, to express the wretchedness of the hypocrite's hope, I shall only add this; certainly that must needs be exceeding dismal, in comparison of which despair is desirable."

These are awful words, and should send an alarm to every heart, and exert an awakening power over every conscience. Under any circumstances that will be a solemn moment, when God taketh away our soul, even though he take it to heaven.

> In vain our fancy strives to paint,
> The moment after death.

What a conviction will that be, when the disembodied spirit says, "I am in eternity." Oh, the surprise, the felicity, the rapture, of being able to add, "I am safe, I am in heaven!" It would seem as if the soul would sink under the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which will then come upon it, surround it, absorb it. But oh, the dreadful reverse! The indescribable, overwhelming astonishment, consternation, and horror of the hypocrite, who wakes up amidst the scenes of the bottomless pit: it is not for language to set forth nor imagination to conceive, the torment that will in a moment come over the miserable soul, whose first words in eternity will be, "I am lost, lost, lost, for ever: I am in hell." It is not only happiness that will then expire, but

[illegible] The wretched spirit will look through the vista of [illegible] ages, and see no glimmering spark of this to [illegible] its present cause of unutterable woe. It will then [illegible] the terrible import of the words of Milton:

> [illegible] dolorous, doleful shades, where peace
> [illegible] never dwell; hope never comes,
> [illegible] but torture without end.

[illegible] these words have their due effect upon us all. [illegible] to ask in deep solemnity, "Is mine the [illegible]?" A hope that will thus 'make me [illegible], it is a good hope through grace.' Am I one [illegible] many victims of self deception, or am I an Israelite [illegible]? Is my profession a lie or a truth? Oh, [illegible], it is eternal life that is at stake upon this question. It is heaven or hell that depends upon it. What a motive to examination, close, anxious, honest examination [illegible] we should be; [illegible] to persuade ourselves that we *are* true christians, [illegible] we are. Let us all under the influence [illegible] these thoughts, carry to God the prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

HOPE IN DEATH.

"*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.*"—Prov. xiv, 32.

Death is an awful event. It is that monster, from the sight and touch of which, all sentient beings recoil with instinctive alarm and dread. Had it occurred but in one single instance, it would fill with

surprise and horror all who beheld it. We can form no conception of the feelings of our first parents, when they saw the dead body of their murdered Abel, and for the first time understood the meaning of that word, death. By one of the boldest and most impressive personifications of Scripture imagery, death is called "*The King of Terrors.*" And who that has witnessed it or duly considered it, will say the metaphor is too strong? O most dreadful point, which art the end of time, and beginning of eternity! O most fearful instant, which shuttest up the prefixed term of life, and determinest the business of our salvation: what things, and how many, and how vast, are to take place in thee! In the same instant, life is to finish, all our works are to be examined, and that state fixed which is to last through all eternity. Merciful God, prepare us by thy grace for that event, so pregnant with eternal consequences.

"It is appointed unto man *once* to die." What is only to be once done, should be well done. If *this* be done ill, it cannot be mended by dying well at another time. God gives some of our senses and our limbs by pairs, that if one be lost or injured, we might not be totally disabled; but of deaths he gives us but one; so that if that miscarry, all is lost, and we are ruined for eternity. Is it not a solemn and a fearful case, that the thing which most imports us, which is to die, hath neither trial, experience, nor remedy? We have but one life on earth, for which no previous existence can prepare us. We stereotype our history as we write it action by action; but a bad *life* may be mended, through God's rich grace, so far at least, as to prevent its disastrous consequences, by a holy death; but for a bad, that is an impenitent and unbelieving death, there can be no remedy. The seal of

eternity is set upon that. As the tree leans, so it falls; as it falls, so it lies; as it lies, so it rots. As our life leaves us, so death generally finds us; as death leaves us, so judgment finds us; and as judgment leaves us, so eternity will find us. Since then, eternity depends upon death, death upon life, and life upon a brittle thread which at any moment may be snapped by accident, or cut through by sudden disease; let us all take up, with far more intelligence, seriousness, and earnestness, than he did who first uttered it, the prayer of the hireling prophet, and say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his."

I now turn to the very striking contrast presented in the passage which stands at the head of this section. Both the wicked and the righteous die. Even for the latter, there is no road to immortality *round* the sepulchre, but only through it. No translation by chariots of fire is granted to them. They must be conformed to their Lord, not only in his life, but in his death. They must die in order that his power might be displayed in sustaining them in the prospect of dissolution, and in their glorious resurrection. His victory over Satan, who had the power of death, will thus be rendered more illustrious by the triumphant resurrection of the saints. But how different the death of the saint and the sinner. The wicked is *driven away* in his wickedness. He would live, but he cannot: he would not die, but he must. He goes not away, but is driven away. He is not led out, but is forced out. His hands grasp the earth, he clings to it, and with a wrench is forced to loose his tenacious hold. Yea, he is dragged out of life, as a criminal, from his home to a place of execution. Cases have occurred in which hell seemed to have begun this side of eternity.

The sinner has sometimes been tortured on the rack of his own horrified imagination, before he was slain by the sword of Divine justice. Blair, in his poem entitled "The Grave," has strikingly pourtrayed this:

> How shocking must thy summons be, O Death!
> To him that is at ease in his possessions;
> Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
> Is quite unfurnished for that world to come.
> In that dread moment, how the frantic soul
> Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
> Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help,—
> But shrieks in vain!—'How wishfully she looks
> On all she's leaving, now no longer hers.'
> A little longer, yet a little longer,
> Oh, might she stay, to wash away her stains,
> And fit her for her passage.—Mournful sight!
> Her very eyes weep blood;—and every groan
> She heaves is big with horror: but the foe,
> Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
> Pursues her close through every lane of life,
> Nor misses once the track, but presses on;
> Till, forced at last to the tremendous verge,
> At once she sinks to everlasting ruin.
> Sure 'tis a serious thing to die.

Still we must admit that this is not always the case. Even wicked men sometimes die with apathy, petrified into stones by a stoical or atheistical philosophy; "there are no bands in their death, and their strength is firm." While others go still farther, and through the power of ignorance and self-deception have a false peace. They may, and do sometimes, die like lambs; but only to wake with the rage, and fury, and misery of scotched snakes, or wounded lions. Their case has been set forth in the section that speaks of the hope of the hypocrite.

But I now turn with delight to the bright and beautiful contrast:—"*The righteous hath hope in his death.*" This I think is one of the few passages of the Old Testament, which refer to a future state. I am aware that

those, among whom was Bishop Warburton, who contend that a future world was unknown to the Jews, or at least is not alluded to in the Jewish Scriptures, explain this expression as signifying nothing more than that, while the wicked are cut off, driven away in their wickedness, by calamities and other visitations of Providence, the righteous should be delivered from the most imminent danger. "That sagacious mind could never have confounded two things so essentially distinct, as hope *in* death, and a hope of escape *from* death; had it not been necessary to subserve a favourite hypothesis." Equally satisfactory and beautiful, is the note of a learned German critic. "A splendid testimony of the knowledge of the Old Testament believers of a future life. The wicked in his calamity, is agitated with the greatest terror. He knows not where to turn. But the godly in this last evil has no fear, he knows to whom to flee, and where he is going." —Dathe in loco. Again! "He dieth in God's grace, and in an assured confidence of the salvation of his soul, and of the glorious resurrection of the body." *

That same hope which sustained the christian under the afflictions, and purified him amidst the temptations and corruptions of life, follows him to the sorrows of death, and the pains of the grave. The same grand and glorious object which had excited his desires, and raised his expectations in life, appears still more glorious as it is now near at hand. He rests upon the same foundation, and Christ is still his hope. He may be able thankfully, and even triumphantly to say, with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge

* Bridges.

shall bestow upon me in that day:" but he comes not off from the Saviour's righteousness to trust his own. The labours, the sacrifices, the holy doings of a whole life, spent in the service of God, add nothing to the entireness and strength of his dependance upon Christ. Never, no never, do the sins of his life appear more sinful, nor his righteousness more defective and worthless, to the believer, than when he is dying. Never does he appear less meritorious, less worthy, than when he views his character, his conduct, himself, in the light of an opening eternity. It is then, that with a deeper humiliation than ever, he cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Then, that he strips off with a holy indignation the last rag and tatter of self-righteousness, and wraps himself more closely in the robe of Christ's righteousness. And he *does* hope. Yes. Even the near prospect of his naked soul standing in the immediate presence of a holy God, and with a clear view of all his past sins, does not deprive him of his hope. "I *can* die," he says; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, until that day."

Then, when all other hopes are extinguished, *this* remains. The worldling's expectations all die, not only with him, but before him. He sees one after another failing him. As regards his health, he struggles long against the evidence of increasing decay, and approaching death; till at length the last possibility of recovery vanishes, and he sullenly says "Well, I feel I *must* die." In that conviction is included the failure of all other expectations—his flattering prospects in life, his incipient prosperity, his cherished connexions, all fade before his eye like some beautiful vision vanishing in thin air, and he has nothing left. Even the christian is subject to all

this; he too sees every earthly hope about to expire in death. Yes—but as these stars of the night pale before him, they are lost in the blaze of the rising sun. His earthly expectations dissolve in the bright illumination of heaven's eternal day which already dawns upon his soul. To the question, "What have I left, when wife, children, home, fortune, prospects, are taken from me?" he exultingly exclaims, "Heaven and immortality."

This makes him willing to go. He dies by his own consent. It is a glad surrender, not a forcible ejectment. It is a voluntary taking leave, not an unwilling separation. The christian mariner weighs anchor, sets the canvass, catches the breeze, turns the helm and prow of his vessel towards the shore of eternity, and sails with an abundant entrance into the haven of eternal rest. He is not driven in, as by the force of the tempest, against his will, and half a wreck. He can take death by his cold hand without a shudder, and bid him welcome. "I can smile at death," said a dying saint, "because my Saviour smiles on me." He finds it an awful thing to die, to go from world to world, to plunge into eternity, to meet God face to face,—but he can do it with composure, and, in many cases, with triumph. He descends to the dark valley with the triumphant challenge, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, I shall arise; and however unworthy, I shall live and reign through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is not an uncommon case for those whose hope was feeble all through life, to have it increased and strengthened in their dying moments. The hands that have hung down, have then been lifted up; the knees that were ever feeble, have been then strengthened; the

harp, so often unstrung and hung upon the willows, has then been taken down, tuned afresh, and struck to the swan-like song of the dying saint, whose lips, till then, had uttered only strains of doubt and fear. It is marvellous to see in how many cases the timid and desponding have become bold, confident, and rejoicing in the very face of the last enemy, and under his uplifted arm, brandishing the fatal dart, which for aught they knew would the next hour pierce them through. What an encouragement to the living, to anticipate that they shall be enabled to hope in death. Go forward, thou fearful believer, there is nothing so terrible to a christian in death, as your perturbed imagination leads you to suppose,—like every other evil, it diminishes in appearance as you approach it. The Sun of Righteousness often shines vertically over the valley of death. The "excellent glory" sends out its beams into that gloomy pass, to allure the traveller onward. The lights are seen in the windows of his Father's house, and Christ will send out the ministering angels to convoy you to his presence; and, more than this, will come himself to meet you. He has told you so. Believe him. Expect him. He says, "Fear not, I am with thee." Respond to the gracious promise, and say, "I will fear no evil, though I walk through the valley, not only of the *shadow* of death, but the valley of death itself, if thou art with me."

But is there no need of admonition, expostulation, and rebuke, to many professing christians on this subject? Is there not a sinful love of life to be overcome, and an equally sinful dread of death? Is there not a practical denial of their hope of immortality in the dread with which many, yea, most, look on to the hour of dissolution? Do not infidels and worldlings, with cutting irony,

sometimes reproach us, and tell us that we do not believe in heaven, or we should be more willing to go to it. We belie our professions of faith and hope, or we should have less love of life and fear of death. "If we believed," they say, "as you do, we should be impatient to be gone." We deserve the rebuke, and let us profit by it. How forcibly does John Howe expostulate with us, in reference to this unwillingness to die, in the last chapter of his transcendently glorious work, entitled "The Blessedness of the Righteous,"—a work which as a whole is one of the sublimest treatises in the English, or any other language. And how earnestly does Baxter follow up the same subject in the words with which I will close this section.

"What was it that rejoiced thee all thy life, in thy prayers, and sufferings, and labours? Was it not the hope of heaven? And was heaven the spring and motive of thy obedience, and the comfort of thy life? And yet wilt thou pass into it with heaviness? And shall thy approaches to it be thy sorrows? Didst thou pray for that which thou wouldest not have? Hast thou laboured for it, and denied thyself the pleasures of the world for it, and now art thou afraid to enter in? Fear not, poor soul! Thy Lord is there; thy husband, and thy head, and life is there, thou hast more there, a thousand-fold more, than thou hast here. Here thou must leave poor mourning friends, that languish in their own infirmities, and troubled thee as well as comforted thee while thou wast with them, and that are hastening after thee, and will shortly overtake thee. But there thou shalt find the souls of all the blessed saints that have lived since the creation till this age. That are all unclothed of the rags

of their mortality, and have laid by their frailties with their flesh, and are made up of holiness, and prepared for joy, and will be suitable companions for thee in thy joys. Why shouldest thou be afraid to go the way that all the saints have gone before thee? Where there is one on earth, how many are there in heaven? And one of them is worth many of us. Art thou better than Noah, and Abraham, and David? than Peter, and Paul, and all the saints? Or dost thou not love their names, and wouldest thou not be with them? Art thou loth to leave thy friends on earth? and hast thou not far better and more in heaven? Why then art thou not as loth to stay from them? Suppose that I, and such as I, were the friends that thou art loth to leave; what if we had died long before thee? If it be our company that thou lovest, thou shouldest then be willing to die, that thou mayest be with us. And if so, why then shouldest thou not be more willing to die, and be with Christ, and all his holy ones, that are so much more excellent than we? Wouldest thou have our company? Remove, then, willingly to that place where thou shalt have it to everlasting; and be not so loth to go from hence, where neither thou nor we can stay. Hadst thou rather travel with us, than dwell here with us? And rather here suffer with us, than reign in heaven with Christ and us?

"Oh! what a brutish thing is flesh! What an unreasonable thing is unbelief! Shall we believe, and fly from the end of our belief? Shall we hope, and be loth to enjoy our hopes? Shall we desire and pray, and be afraid of attaining our desires, and lest our prayers should be heard? Shall we spend our lives in labour and travel, and be afraid of coming to our journey's end? Do you

love life, or do you not? If not, why are you afraid of death? If you do, why then are you loth to pass into everlasting life? You know there is no hope of immortality on earth. Hence you must pass, whether you will or not, as all your fathers have done before you; it is therefore in heaven, or nowhere, that endless life is to be had. If you can live here for ever, do. Hope for it, if any have done so before you. Go to some man of a thousand years old, and ask him how he made shift to draw out his life so long. But if you know that man walketh here in a vain show, and that his life is a shadow, a dream, a post; and that all these things shall be dissolved, and the fashion of them passeth away; is it not more reasonable that we should set our hearts on the place where there is hope of our continuance, than where there is none? And where we must live for ever, than where we must be but for so short a time?

"Alas! poor darkened, troubled soul! Is the presence of Christ less desirable in thy eyes than the presence of such sinful worms as we, whom thou art loth to part with? Is it more grievous to thee to be absent from us, than from thy Lord? from earth, than from heaven; from sinners, than from blessed saints; from trouble and frailty, than from glory? Hast thou any thing here that thou shalt want in heaven? Alas, that we should thus draw back from happiness, and follow Christ so heavily and sadly into life! But all this is owing to the enemies that now molest our peace. Indwelling sin, and a flattering world, and a brutish flesh, and interposing death, are our discouragements that drive us back. But all these enemies shall shortly be overcome.

"Fear not death, then, let it do its worst. It can give thee but one deadly gripe that shall kill itself, and prove

thy life; as the wasp that leaves its sting behind, and can sting no more. It shall but snuff the candle of thy life, and make it shine brighter when it seems to be put out; it is but an undressing, and a gentle sleep. That which thou couldest not here attain by all our preaching, and all thy prayers, and cares, and pains, thou shalt speedily attain by the help of death. It is but the messenger of thy gracious Lord, and calleth thee to him, to the place that he hath prepared."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NECESSITY AND MEANS OF STRENGTHENING HOPE.

WHATEVER in us is good, and yet imperfect, should be made better,—for in nothing can we pretend to perfection; and whatever is good and weak should be strengthened. Who will say his hope is so lively as not to need quickening, so vigorous as not to need strengthening? It is lamentable to look abroad upon professors of religion, and see how low their expectations are of heaven above, how few affections they have there. But how much more lamentable is it to look in and see how low our own hopes are. Let any christian glance back through a week, and as far as he can recollect, calculate how many times, with what length of time, and with what earnestness of feeling, he has thought of heaven and eternity. Let him call to recollection his troubles, and think how little consolation he has derived from the prospect of everlasting glory. Let him remember his general conduct, and ask how little of resistance of evil tempers and strong temptation he has maintained by the anticipation of the perfect purity of heaven. Let him think of his enjoyment, and inquire how much of it has really arisen from the idea he is going on to life eternal. He will be astonished to find how little this christian grace has had to do with the formation of his character, the guidance of his conduct, and the supply of his felicity.

He will be humbled to discover his amazing short-comings in this one branch of christian duty. No one knows how prevalent is his earthly-mindedness till he exercises this *intro*spection and *retro*spection. When we consider what heaven is, it might be expected that a day could no more pass, with those who believe and expect it, without some lively anticipation of it, than a monarch could forget for the same time the near approach of the ceremonial of his coronation. An eternal state of infinite enjoyment ever at hand, and believed to be at hand, and yet that sublime incomprehensible glory so hidden behind thick clouds of the petty cares of this world, as to be scarcely seen or thought of for days, perhaps weeks, together; at least with any seriousness and power! O christian, do you not need to have your flagging desires quickened?—Your languid expectations stimulated? Do you not need to have your earthliness subdued, and to become in thought, feeling, and action, more like the candidate for, and expectant of, a crown of life and glory? For shame, for shame, to have heaven opening its glories above; yea, and eternity spreading out its ages before you; and yet have so few thoughts and feelings in reference to that wondrous state. Professing to believe it to be a reality, and yet treating it as if it were some oriental tale, some mere vision of unreal felicity and honour.

You need to have your hope strengthened for *yourselves*. You are perhaps deeply and heavily afflicted, and want support and consolation. How would you be sustained and comforted, if your eye and your heart were in heaven. The prospect of eternal glory, believed and expected, would lift you above your troubles into the sunshine of holy joy. All God's waves and billows might roll over you, but you would not be drowned; your vessel would float

upon the wave, and rise upon the crest of the billow, and with her anchor well cast, would ride out the storm. Have you not often had to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?"

And as you need a stronger hope for your consolation, so you equally need it for your *sanctification*. Why has temptation such power over you? Why is your holiness so imperfect? Why are your corruptions so strong? Why do you make no more progress in the christian life? Why all this? I tell you again, because your hope is low. Increase this, and you will increase your holiness. You will grow in grace, if you will grow in heavenliness. I would sound it over a lukewarm professor, over a lukewarm church, over a lukewarm Christendom, "You are feeble in prayer, in righteousness, in watchfulness, in diligence, in every thing else,—because you are negligent in this." Christian, would you have been vanquished in that conflict; would you have succumbed to that temptation; would you have yielded to that foe, had the eye of your soul been fixed at the time on the excellent glory? And it should be a matter of consideration with you, that as you need this grace now, so you know not how much greater need you may yet stand in for its supporting and sanctifying powers. It is not wise, I know, nor good, to anticipate afflictions, and by painful forebodings to go out and meet troubles half way. Our kind and merciful Lord has forbidden this: but it is prudent to recollect that such things may happen to us, and it is well to be prepared for them. The mariner does not torment himself beforehand with the dread of storms, but he prepares for them. A weak hope is an ill preparation for heavy trials, and we ought not to have a strong one to seek

when we want it to use. We should not have to provide the anchor when the storm rages. It is a blessed thing, when both sore troubles and fierce temptations find us rejoicing with strong consolation in hope of the glory of God. Neither will do us much harm then. But how sad to be overtaken with dangerous tempests and a weak anchor.

And as there is need that your hope should be strengthened on your own account, so also is it for the sake of *others*. You have influence upon them, and they upon you. One lively spiritual christian will probably enkindle a flame of sacred love in others. Warmth is diffusive, and so is cold,—hence the lukewarm as well as the lively tend to make others like themselves. Few examples have more power than that of a believer going on his way rejoicing. His song, as he soars to heaven, like that of the lark, attracts attention and gives delight.

And then how important is it to have your hope strengthened, and its joy increased, for the sake of the worldly-minded around you who are strangers to religion. If they see the professor of religion as earthly as themselves, as soon cast down in trouble, no more intent upon spiritual discipline for an immortal state than themselves; if they see no sparkle of joy in your eye, hear no note of praise upon your tongue, observe no stamp of heaven on your character and conduct; if eternal life appear to have no more reality in you than it has in them; if you are as little drawn towards its glories as they are; if it have no more power to support and comfort you than it has to comfort them,—what will their conclusion be, but that it is all a mere profession? But on the other hand, what an effect would be produced, if all that profess religion were to be seen ever enjoying and feasting on the

anticipated pleasures of immortality. So firm in the faith, so strong in the desire, and so confident in the expectations of eternal glory, as to be preserved holy by it amidst surrounding corruption, cheerful under the pressure of affliction, resolute by it against fiercest temptations, and thus to make it apparent that they have a mighty and blessed something which the worldly do not possess. Did professors live up to their duty and privileges; did they appear to consider heaven as a grand reality; were they seen with the rays of the hidden glory irradiating their countenances, and sparkling in their tears, what an effect would be produced. "O christians, show the unbelieving world, by your rejoicing, how they are mistaken in their choice. Be ashamed that an empty sot, and one that must be for ever a firebrand in hell, should live a more joyful life than you. O, do not so wrong your Lord, your faith, your endless joys, as to walk in heaviness, and cast away the joy of the Lord, which is your strength. Doth it become a companion of angels, a member of Christ, a child of God, an heir of heaven, to be grieved at every petty cross, and to lay by all the sense of his felicity because some trifle of the world falls cross to his desires. Is it seemly for one that must be everlastingly as full of joy as the sun is of light, to live in such a self-troubling, drooping state, as to disgrace religion, and frighten away the ungodly from the doors of grace, that by your joyful lives might be induced to enter? For the Lord's sake, christians, and for your own sake, and in pity to the ungodly, yield not to the tempter that would trouble you when he cannot devour you. Is God your Father, and Christ your Saviour, and the Spirit your Sanctifier, and heaven your home? O,

christians, make conscience then of this command, 'Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.' Did you but know how God approveth such rejoicing, and how much it pleaseth him above your pining sorrow, and how it strengtheneth the soul, and sweeteneth duty, and easeth suffering, and honoureth religion, and encourageth others, and how suitable it is to gospel grace, and to your high relation and ends, and how much better it seems to subdue the very sins that trouble you, than your fruitless, self-weakening complainings do—I say, did you well consider all these things, it would sure revive your drooping spirits."*

Who then can doubt the *necessity* of having hope strengthened. Let us now go on to consider the MEANS of strengthening it. Let the reader here pause for a moment, and lift up his heart to God in prayer for the ability to understand these means and the disposition to adopt them, and a blessing upon the perusal of what follows.

1. There must be a real, earnest, intelligent *desire* for this. We shall seek nothing without wishing to possess it, and our efforts will be in exact proportion to our desires. And do we *not* desire it, if indeed we are real christians, and are already partakers of the earnest of our heavenly inheritance? Can any thing be more desirable in itself? Think what it means, *this* hope, so great, so glorious, so well founded, so sublime in its object, so purifying, so consoling, so beatifying, in its influence. Christian, give loose to your desire, foster your most intense longings after it. Can you be satisfied with those faint wishes, those languid expectations you now possess? Must you not say,

* Baxter.

Dear Lord, and shall I ever lie
At this poor dying rate?

Do you not feel ashamed to think of the lukewarm and heartless manner in which you are treating such a subject as the heaven of the eternal God? Is heaven worth so little that you can be satisfied with a few mere probabilities and may-bes, that you may reach it? Were you to lose a pin from your dress, or a button from your coat, and one should come and tell you he had found it, you would care nothing whether the thing were true or not; but if your life or fortune were in peril, and one should come and inform you it was probable that they were all safe, how you would long to have your belief that this blessed news was true, confirmed and made more strong. And will you not intensely desire to have your expectation of *heaven* strengthened?

2. With this connect a *determination* that you *will* live after a different fashion. Recollect, this grace, like every other, is a duty as well as a privilege. "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Observe, the apostle speaks of a full assurance, and speaks of it in the way of command; and a command delivered not only to a few more eminent christians, but to all. It is every one's duty. And he speaks of it as if it were within every one's reach. What is matter of duty should be matter of determination. You must rouse yourself, professor, to this great work, and resolve to do it. Resolve by an intelligent, deliberate, and firm purpose, to be a more heavenly-minded man. Come under the bond of your own promise to God, to act as one may be expected to do, whose citizenship is in heaven.

3. There must be a more habitual, devout, and prayerful

perusal and *study of the Word of God.* Let the reader mark each and all of the words I have here used. This reading of the Scripture must be habitual, not only occasional; the exercise of every day, and not merely of the Sabbath-day. It must be devout; with a mind solemn, serious, and reverential, recollecting that the Bible is God's silent, but impressive voice; and not lightly, carelessly, and perfunctorily. If it be devoutly done, it will also be prayerfully done. We should not only open the Bible ourselves, but ask God to open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things out of his law. And then the Scripture must be *studied* as well as perused. There must be an anxious desire to penetrate its meaning. We must use it as we would a direction given to us to regain our lost health or property, the writing of which was in some places a little illegible, and the meaning of which was a little obscure. How we should pore over such a document. How minutely we should examine it. How anxiously we should peruse it. We should not trust to any body's eyes, however we might ask their assistance, but should read for ourselves. So let us search the Scriptures, for this is the way to have our desire and expectations strengthened. There is a passage on this subject which well deserves our attention: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."—Rom. xv, 4. The apostle had just quoted from the sixty-ninth Psalm an expression which referred to the coming Messiah. The Gentile churches were in danger of regarding these holy writings as relating, if not exclusively, yet chiefly, to the Jews, and referring to a state of things which had passed away. To correct this mistake he says that the Old

Testament Scriptures were written for Christians as well as for Jews. These were the inspired writings which Timothy had known from a child as able to make men wise unto salvation, and which are now "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."—2 Tim. iii, 16. This stamps a value and an importance upon the Old Testament, in opposition to modern tendencies to disparage the writings of Moses and the prophets.* But what I now wish to show by the quotation is the importance, in order to the maintenance of heavenly mindedness, of a devout study of the Word of God, for the apostle says that "we *through patience and comfort of the Scriptures* might have hope." To have hope must here mean not to obtain it in the first instance, for that is done by faith, and not by patience, but to hold it fast, as the word often signifies. So of the other expression, "comfort," the consolations of the gospel do not originate our desire and expectation of heaven, but they sweetly and wonderfully sustain them.

The important lesson then taught by this passage, as well as by very many others, is that the vitality of the soul is maintained and all the roots of piety strengthened

* The direction which modern scepticism, in the views and writings of some professedly christian writers, even of those holding tutorships and professorships in our National Universities, is now taking, is to set aside the inspiration of much of the Old Testament; to resolve many of its historic *facts* into *myths*; and indeed to represent the entire Jewish dispensation as nothing but a temporary, earthly, narrow, and in fact, gross and degrading accommodation of religion to the blindness and infirmity of a semi-barbarous nation,—a system wholly disconnected with Christianity. So far does this spirit of daring and sceptical criticism go, that by natural inference from these premises, it must be concluded that the New Testament writers must have been either ignorant or dishonest in their habitual and avowed reverence for the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God. In opposition to all this, as an able writer in "The British Quarterly" has shown, in a temperate and logical confutation of Professor Baden Powell's work, entitled "Christianity without Judaism,"—"The religion of

by the devout use of the Scriptures. It is, if I may change the metaphor, the medicine that cures a sickly state of the soul; the elixir that stimulates a flagging one; and the food that nourishes a feeble one. We know nothing about the future object of our supreme desire, but what we get from the Bible. To produce this expectation, to sustain it, to strengthen it, is one great design of the divine record. No wonder then that people's desires and expectations of heaven are so low and the prevalence of earthliness so great; that professors complain of their doubts and fears, their small consolation and their meagre joy; that heaven is little more than a name, and eternal glory only a thing to be heard of in sermons, but not realised in their experience—while the Bible is a neglected book. Nothing can be a substitute for this; neither sabbaths, sermons nor sacraments; neither hymns nor good books: in addition to all these it is the Bible that must sustain and invigorate the spiritual life. This is not only the unadulterated milk for new-born babes; but the strong meat for them that are of full age. A professor who is to any great extent a stranger to his Bible must be but a feeble, though he may be a sincere, christian. The crumbs of Scripture which are contained in "Daily Portions," furnish but a scanty morsel of the bread of life, altogether

the Old Testament is essentially the same, as well as from the same Divine source, with that of the gospel,—its forms alone being temporary, and its doctrines eternally true. The Christian Church is historically and vitally one with the Jewish Church (the outward form of voluntary local societies being substituted for that of a national and political body); Christianity is in fact Judaism developed and perfected, freed from its national trammels, and laying aside its gorgeous robes of symbolism, and addressing itself no longer to a portion of mankind, but to the whole race. And therefore, we maintain that you cannot get rid of the Old Testament without cutting away the roots of the New, and charging the writers of it with an amount of error fatal to the moral value and decisive authority of their teaching."—British Quarterly, No. liv, 423.

undeserving their designation—a *portion*. Why is the life of the church in this age so feeble? Why are spirituality of mind, and heavenliness of affection so low? Why have we such a race of worldly minded professors? Why? The private reading and study of the Scriptures are sadly neglected. Men are strangers to their Bibles. The Bible was never more widely circulated, but at the same time, never by great numbers of professors less devoutly read. Where are now the men and the women to whom the Bible is a book of daily study and delight in the closet—to whom its words are "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb, and more desired than their necessary food?" The magazine, the reviews, and the newspaper, and the last new novel or tale, have so far pushed out the Bible, that what they hear on the Sabbath day read from the pulpit, or the chapter at family prayer, if perchance family prayer be kept up, is all the converse multitudes of the members of our churches have with the Word of God. No wonder that they have to sing that doleful hymn—

Long have I sat beneath the sound
  Of thy salvation, Lord,
But still how weak my faith is found,
  And knowledge of thy word.

How cold and feeble is my love,
  How negligent my fear;
How low my hopes of heaven above,
  How few affections there!

4. If we would have our hope strengthened, we must have our *faith* strengthened, for the latter is to the former as cause to effect. We may desire a good thing even where we have no ground to believe it, but we cannot expect it if we do not believe it. We have made this clear in an earlier part of this treatise, but because of its

importance and the prevailing ignorance in reference to it, I dwell upon it to reiteration. Let us, therefore, if we would raise higher the superstructure of our expectations, proportionably strengthen our faith, which is the basis on which they rest. If we present the prayer, "Lord, increase our hope," we must precede it by that other petition, "Lord, increase our faith." Let any one watch the operations of his own mind, and he will soon see how intimately these two graces are connected. Let him observe how, when a future good object is before him, his desires are influenced and his expectations are raised just in proportion as he believes that it may be his. When at first his belief is very feeble, he has but a languid desire and a faint expectation; but as his convictions of the reality of the object deepen, and his persuasions strengthen that it is within his reach, his anticipations brighten that he shall possess and enjoy it. We must seek then to have our faith in Christ made more intelligent and more firm. We should make ourselves acquainted with the historical and internal evidences of Christianity, especially those of miracles, prophecy, the resurrection of Christ, the history of the Jews, the power and victories of the gospel itself against opposition; and especially the experimental evidence, or its divine might over our own souls in converting, sanctifying, and sustaining them. The expectation of eternal life is so grand, so lofty, and so immense; the prospect is so sublime, that we should be thoroughly well grounded in all the proofs that it is not the baseless fabric of a splendid vision. The faith of very many professors is little more than a traditional one. They can, if asked, give no *reason* for the hope that is in them. This is not as it should be;—God has not left himself without a witness, in the Word he has given us. He has

given us his signature, in the Word of his grace, and it is both a disrespect to him, as well as a disparagement to our own reason, to disregard the evidences of christianity as a divine revelation. How satisfactory and delightful is it to see the New Jerusalem, the Paradise of God, the Heavenly City, with its foundations of precious stones, its streets of gold, its gates of pearl, standing out before us in all the light of christian evidence. It is the conviction of its truth and reality, that quickens our desires, and enlarges our expectations. "No, no," says the intelligent believer, who is in the pursuit and expectation of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, "I am not following cunningly devised fables; I am not gazing at, and chasing, a brilliant meteor of imposture and delusion. I cannot be deceived. I have evidence not to be resisted, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. I feel that in the belief of this gospel my feet are standing, not upon a quicksand or a morass, but upon a rock." "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and, knowing in whom I have believed, I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day." From that faith, as a natural consequence, hope *must* spring up.

5. Connected with this is the too much neglected duty of meditation. "And this is a very great cause," says Jeremy Taylor, "of the dryness and expiration of men's devotion, because our souls are so little refreshed with the waters and dews of meditation. We draw our water from standing pools, which never are filled but with sudden showers, and therefore we are so often dry; whereas,

if we would draw water from the fountains of our Saviour, and derive them through the channels of diligent and prudent meditation, our devotion would be a continual current, and safe against the barrenness of continual droughts."

In this busy age men say they have no leisure for this sacred duty. They should rather say they have no inclination. The world is ever encroaching upon the time of devotion—stealing away first the morning season, then the evening, and it is to be feared in many cases, a part of the Sabbath. There was a time when the professing christian would have thought his soul robbed of its treasure, if he could not be alone with God and his Bible in his closet, in "the sweet hour of prime." If no other time could be commanded for thoughtful reflection, how many of those hours of each Sabbath might be employed for this, which are now spent in idleness over the table or round the fire. Ought there not to be times when every christian should not only pray, but think, meditate, and contemplate? when he should look up, look in, look back, look forward? Can our souls be in a good condition, if we never, or rarely, practise this duty? Is it possible our hope can be strengthened without it? And in order to this invigoration, what should be the object of our contemplation? I answer, the heavenly state. Of course all divine subjects should be matters of devout thought, God, Christ, Salvation, Providence—indeed the whole range of divine truth in the Bible; but to inflame our desires after heaven, and to quicken our expectations of it, heaven itself should be the subject of meditation. Does the traveller, away from home, and going to it, need to be admonished to meditate upon his house, his wife, his family? Does the heir of a title and a large

possession need to be exhorted to meditate upon his coming fortune? Yet the christian, who is the heir of God and glory, can scarcely be induced to give an hour, at any time, to think of the heaven to which he is going. Oh, amazing insensibility! Humiliating earthly-mindedness! Professor, blush over your stupidity, and determine to give more time to the consideration of your glorious and eternal destiny. Now and then select, and devoutly read, all the passages of Scripture which speak of heaven, especially 1 Cor. xv.; 2 Cor. v. 1-4; 1 Thes. iv.; 1 Peter i. 1-7; 2 Peter iii.; Rev. iv., v., vii., xxi., xxii. To this telescope apply the eye of faith, and look up into heaven; bring its glory nearer, and endeavour to realize its stupendous felicities.

And as another means of increasing your desire after heaven, meditate also upon your own state, and the real condition of the globe on which you dwell. Enkindle, raise, and strengthen your longing after heaven, by a deep sense of the various, numerous, and complicated ills of earth. Think of yourselves,—your ignorance, corruption, and sorrow; your distrust, unbelief, and waywardness; your anxious cares, foreboding fears, and distressing perplexities; your privations, losses, and disappointments; your personal and relative afflictions; your wearisome labour and ceaseless toil—and should not the experience of these things make you desire that better world, where all this will be removed for ever? Is not this the way to improve your present circumstances, by making them the means of lifting you up, and helping you on to heaven? This is to gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles.

In the same way let the condition of the world, without, around, and before you, invigorate your expecta-

tions, and increase your desires of heaven. I will admit that the face of nature is lovely, and that we live in a beautiful world. Yes—we are surrounded with fascinations, where "only man is vile." But behind and beneath that veil of material splendour, what a mass of moral corruption lies half manifested and half concealed. Earth is inhabited by a population of which, till subdued by divine grace, every one is an enemy and a rebel against God. Think of the loathsome crimes of idolatry; the delusions of Mohammedanism; the stubborn unbelief of Judaism; the corruptions of Popery; the blasphemies of infidelity; the bloody wars; the cruel oppressions of slavery; the tyranny of despots; the conspiracies of traitors; the filthy adulteries; the horrid murders; the multitudes to whom the apostle's awful description in the first chapter of the Romans will apply. Then add to these crimes, the various and complicated forms of human wretchedness that are to be found on earth,—the inconceivable horrors of famine, pestilence, and earthquake; the hundreds of loathsome and agonising diseases and accidents to which the human frame is subject; the rigors of poverty; the hearts bruised, broken, crushed by ingratitude, conjugal infidelity, filial disobedience, disappointed hopes, defeated schemes. Nor is this all: our world is the domain of death; the slaughter-house of the saints; the territory of Satan; and at times, apparently the very suburbs of hell. Such is this world—a vale of tears, where "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." What a black and awful contrast to heaven. Surely, surely, there is infinitely more than enough, in the contemplation of such a picture, to wean us from earth, and lead us to set our hope upon heaven.

Nor must we stop here; for if we come from the world to the church, we shall find in that, abundant matter to cause us to lift up our longing eyes to the state—

> Where all the air is love,
> And all the region peace.

"I am," said a good man, "almost as weary of the church as I am of the world." No wonder. Look at her broken unity; her blighted peace; her enfeebled strength; her tarnished beauty; her prostrate honours. See her various sects, and their bitter sectarianism. Hear her angry controversies, and her strife of tongues. Notice the ignorance or indolence, the inconsistencies and falls of many of her ministers, and the imperfections of all her members. How partially sanctified, how wrinkled and how blemished does she appear; alas, how unlike the beautiful vision of the New Jerusalem in the apocalypse, coming down out of heaven, having the glory of God, and adorned as a bride prepared for her husband. Is there not sufficient in all this, did we but consider it, to quicken our desires and strengthen our expectations of the church triumphant, when she shall be seen without blemish, wrinkle, spot, or any such thing?

6. Gurnall pithily and pointedly says, "Wouldst thou have thy hope strong, keep thy conscience clear. Thou canst not defile this, but thou wilt weaken that. Living godly in this present world, and looking for the blessed hope, are both conjoined.—Titus ii. 13. A soul wholly void of godliness must needs be destitute of all true hope; and the godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking, will soon find his hope languishing. All sin is anguish meat; it disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears, and shakings of heart."

This is as important and impressive as it is quaint and true. The man who can expect heaven, and sin at the same time, is in the last stage of delusion. Even the little imperfections of the real christian, which are not incompatible with a state of grace, if not resisted, mortified, and removed, will rise like a mist to dim the lustre of heaven's glorious sun; while presumptuous, deliberate transgression will throw it into total eclipse. Keep conscience then, professor, as the noon-tide clear.

7. The way to have hope strengthened, is to keep it in constant exercise. Bodily strength is thus increased. Indolence and inactivity, when indulged as a habit, and not used for repose after labour, and for recovering from fatigue, enervate the muscular frame, while well regulated exertion invigorates it. So it is with the soul, both as regards its natural faculties and moral powers. One act prompts another; and acts repeated settle into habits. The way to have stronger faith, is to exercise what we have; and so it is with regard to its sister grace. Christian, if it be desirable, and can you doubt it, to have a stronger desire, a more confident expectation, of eternal glory, let not what you have lie dormant in your soul, like some old recipe for health in your drawer, which is never read and never used, but call it out into real continuous application. Never, if possible, let a day pass without at least one steady glance at the heavenly firmament. Let not earth have such a complete ascendancy over your soul, over all its thoughts, feelings, desires, and pursuits, as to engross one whole day to itself. Even in the hurry, and eagerness, and heat of the battle of life, and the absorbing power of business, endeavour to lower the feverish pulse of worldliness by a frequent thought of glory to come. Even when pressed with secular anxieties,

and panting in the career of commercial competition, dart one idea into eternity; catch one glimpse of those treasures laid up in heaven. Go forth each day to your industry with a devout recollection that you are also to trade for another world, to lay up treasures in heaven, and are to grow wealthy in the unsearchable riches of Christ. When tempted to dishonest or dishonourable gain, think of heaven. When disappointed, think of heaven. When called to suffer losses, think of heaven. When injured and oppressed, think of heaven. And then, when returning from the strife of competition to your own habitation, weary and worn with labour, dispirited and discouraged by an unsuccessful day, and this to be followed by a restless and sleepless night, think of heaven. In all other troubles and perplexities adopt this same practice. Yes, and in your more prosperous seasons do the same. You should make this practice run like a golden thread through all your states of mind, in all the varying circumstances of life, uniting all in one holy habit of heavenly-mindedness, till by daily exercise, to hope becomes as natural and as easy to you as to live.

8. But all this is not enough without believing, earnest, and persevering *prayer*. This is the way the apostle took to help the saints of his day to obtain this precious blessing; for a proof of which, I refer you again to Rom. xv. 13, a passage we have already considered. He that would have a life of hope, must live a life of prayer. If hope is the ladder by which we ascend to heaven, prayer is the ladder by which we ascend to hope. In conversion God implants the seed of this grace; in sanctification he causes it to grow; in full assurance he brings it out in all its full-blown beauty and fragrance. It is all his work. But then he will not do it, if he is not asked to do it.

We cannot have it without his grace, and he will not give his grace but in answer to our prayers. In a way of sovereign mercy he often bestows the grace of conversion unasked, and is thus "found of them that sought him not;" but in subsequent donations the Lord seems very much to regulate his conduct by the rule of bestowing his richest favours where he knows they are most coveted, and will be most prized. The principle whence divine communications flow, is free, unmerited benignity; but in the mode of bestowing its fruits, it is worthy of the Supreme Ruler to consult his majesty, by withholding a copious supply till he has excited in the heart a profound estimation of his gifts. Now surely the least consideration must convince you of the infinite desirableness of such a blessing, as a living, vigorous, and assured expectation of heaven, and of the imperative necessity of intensely earnest prayer to obtain it. Oh! christian, let there be ineffable longings after this great blessing; stretch every sail, launch forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, by importunate prayer, that you may be brought into this holy, happy, expecting frame. *Give yourself* to prayer; feel as if you must have the blessing, and that God alone can give it. Set your heart upon it. Be contented with nothing less than a full assurance. Use a reverend freedom, a humble familiarity with God. Tell him that you cannot do without this confident expectation of things hoped for; that it is not only heaven hereafter, you want, but hope of it *now*. And let it be the prayer of faith, as well as of fervency. This is one of the blessings he has promised to give. It *must* accord with his will to bestow it. He will answer if you have faith, not only the spirit, but the very letter of your request. It honours him to bestow it; it honours him to be asked to bestow

it, and it honours him to expect it. He loves to see his children rejoicing in hope, and he loves to hear them ask to be enabled to do so. By all the comfort this would bring to yourselves; by all the credit it would give to religion; by all the beneficial influence it would exert on others, I entreat you to seek after a livelier expectation of a glorious immortality, and to cultivate a spirit of fervent and believing prayer, in order to obtain it.

And now pious reader, in finishing this volume, I would say that if it shall contribute in any degree to the removal of your doubts and fears, and to the strengthening of your faith and hope, my end in writing it will be accomplished. However much it is below its great theme, and even vastly mightier minds than mine, must of necessity fall below such a subject, it may by God's blessing be of some little service to the members of God's chosen and redeemed family. No one can be more sensible than I am of its defects, and had another pen undertaken the task, mine had not been taken up. Still, with all its defects, I can adopt the language of the pious Bishop Horne, in the preface to his Exposition of the Psalms, "Could the author flatter himself that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the songs of Sion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved swiftly and smoothly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance is sweet."

The end, at any rate, of my own life approaches, and so indeed does the end of the world, when hope with all

mankind will cease, consummated with some in eternal fruition, and terminating with others in everlasting despair. Oh what scenes of ineffable glory or of inconceivable horror are before us. How all that is glorious or terrible on earth dwindles into insignificance before the scenes, which by the pen of inspiration are presented to our view. The advent of Christ, when he shall come a second time without sin unto salvation, is the grand object to which believers under the christian dispensation should be looking forward, with a still livelier and more joyful expectation, than did the pious Israelites under Judaism, to his coming in the flesh. "O christians, let us wake up from our slumbers and rise from our prostration in the dust, and live as ever waiting for that hour. What matter though we be poor, slighted, slandered, forgotten, moving in the shadows of this world, so that we attain unto a glorious resurrection. O most glad hour, when it shall dawn towards the first day of the everlasting week; when there shall be a making ready in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; when legions of angels shall gather round the Sun of Righteousness, and all orders and hosts of heaven shall know that the time for 'the manifestation of the sons of God' is come! What joy shall there be at that hour in the world unseen! and what a thrill, as of a penetrating light, shall run through the dust where the saints are sleeping! When was there such a day-spring since the time when 'God said, let there be light, and there was light?' He shall come, and all his shining ones; ten thousand times ten thousand, whose countenances are 'like lightning,' and their 'raiment white as snow;' all the heavenly court, angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim,—clad in unimaginable splendours; and the righteous shall arise from the grave, and the earth shall be

lightened with their glory; they shall stretch forth their hands to meet Him, and bow themselves before the brightness of His coming. O blessed hour, after all the sorrows, and wrongs, and falsehoods, and darkness, and burdens of life, to see Him face to face; to be made sinless; to shine with an exceeding strength; to be as the light, in which there 'is no darkness at all!' BE THIS OUR HOPE, OUR CHIEFEST TOIL, OUR ALMOST ONLY PRAYER."

"Eternal HOPE, when yonder spheres sublime
Peal'd their first notes to sound the march of Time,
Thy joyous youth began—but not to fade—
When all the solar planets have decay'd;
When wrapt in fire, the realms of ether glow,
And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below;
Thou undismay'd shalt o'er the ruins smile,
And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile."

THE END.

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